THE MAZE

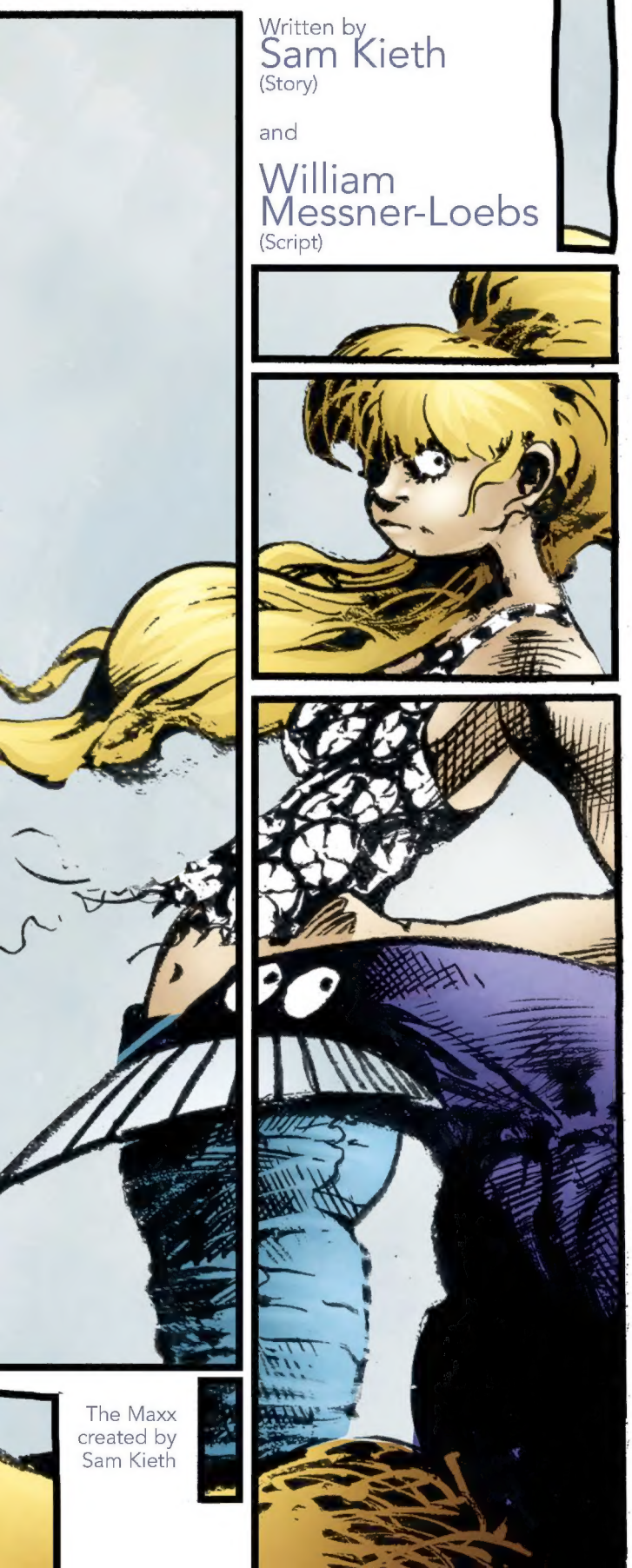
Sam Kieth · William Messner-Loebs

THE MAXX

MAXIMIZED

Sam Kieth

William Messner-Loebs



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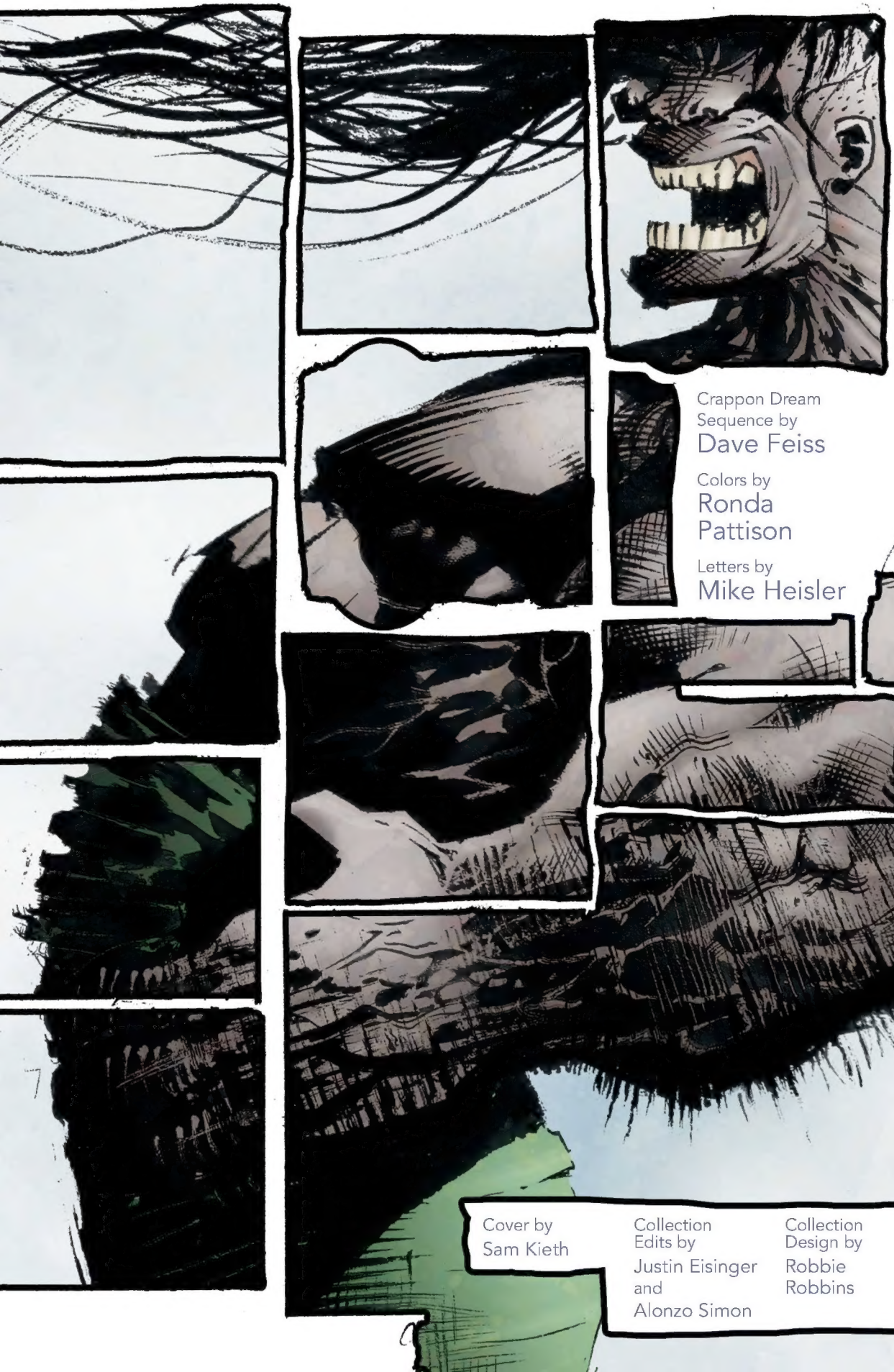

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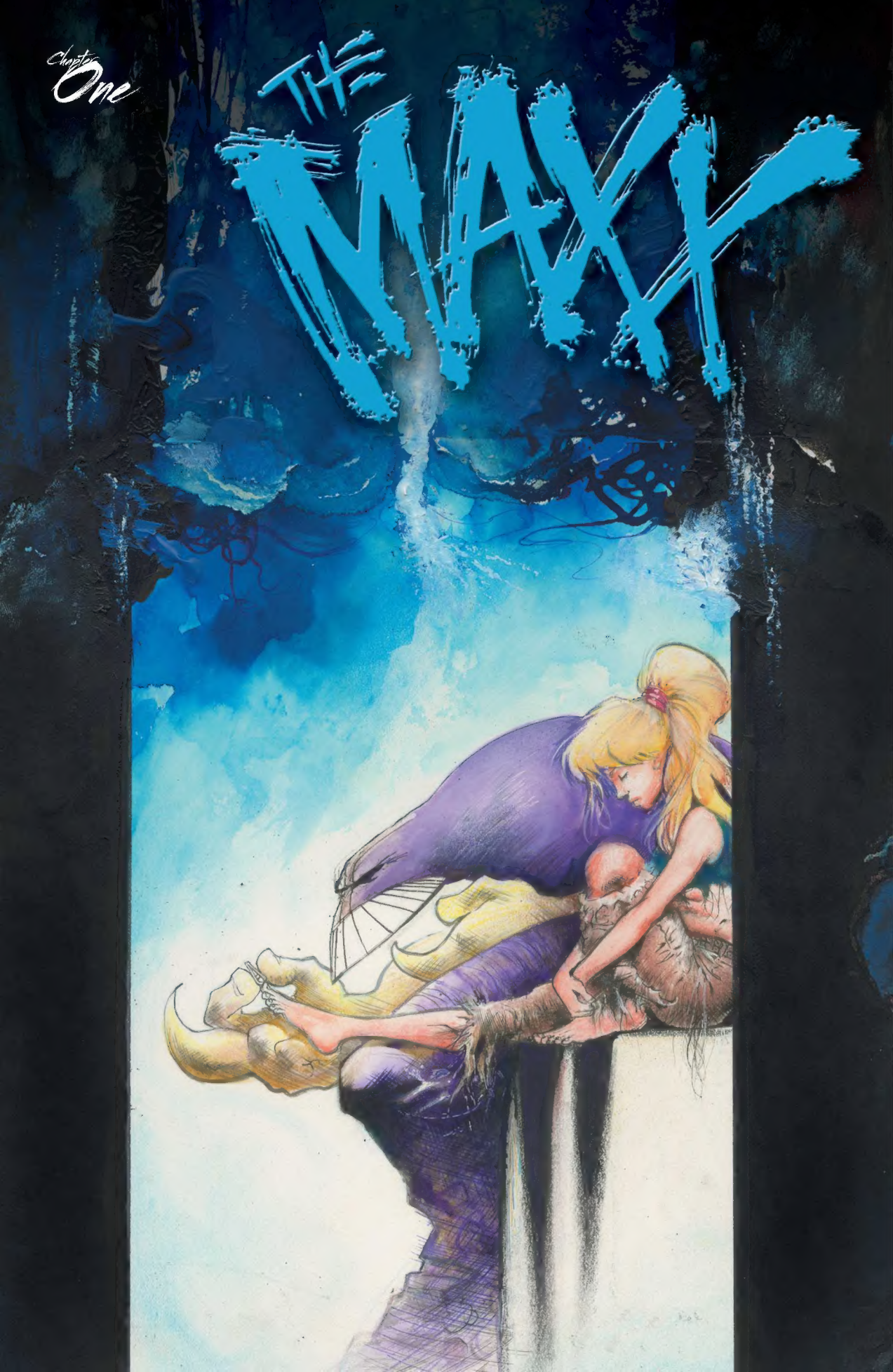
Chapter One

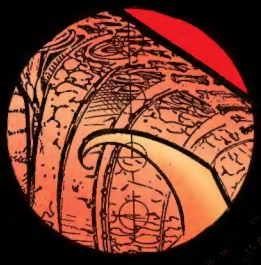
THE MASK



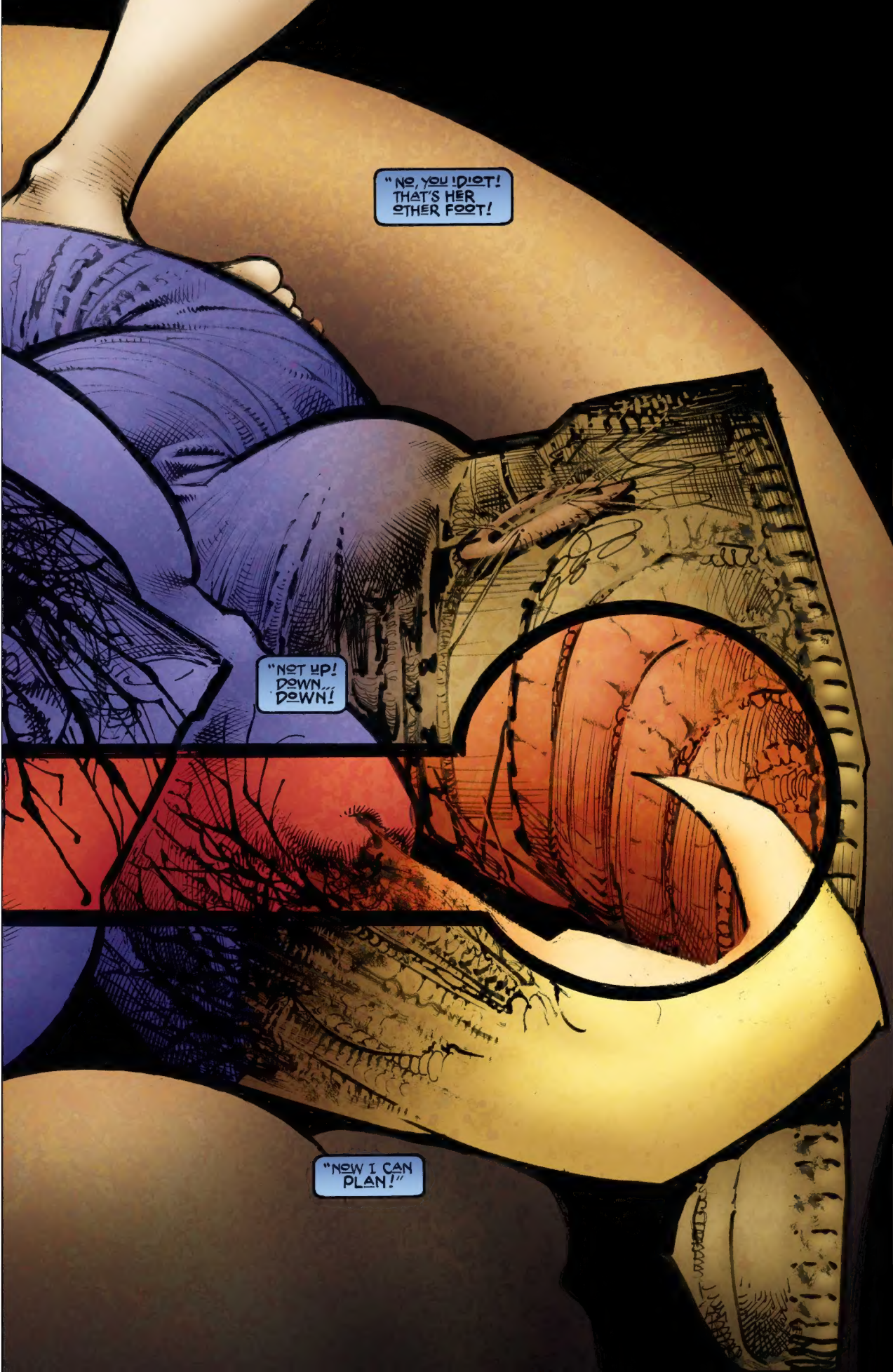
"A BIT MORE TO THE LEFT... MORE... MORE... THERE.

"NOW DOWN... FURTHER...

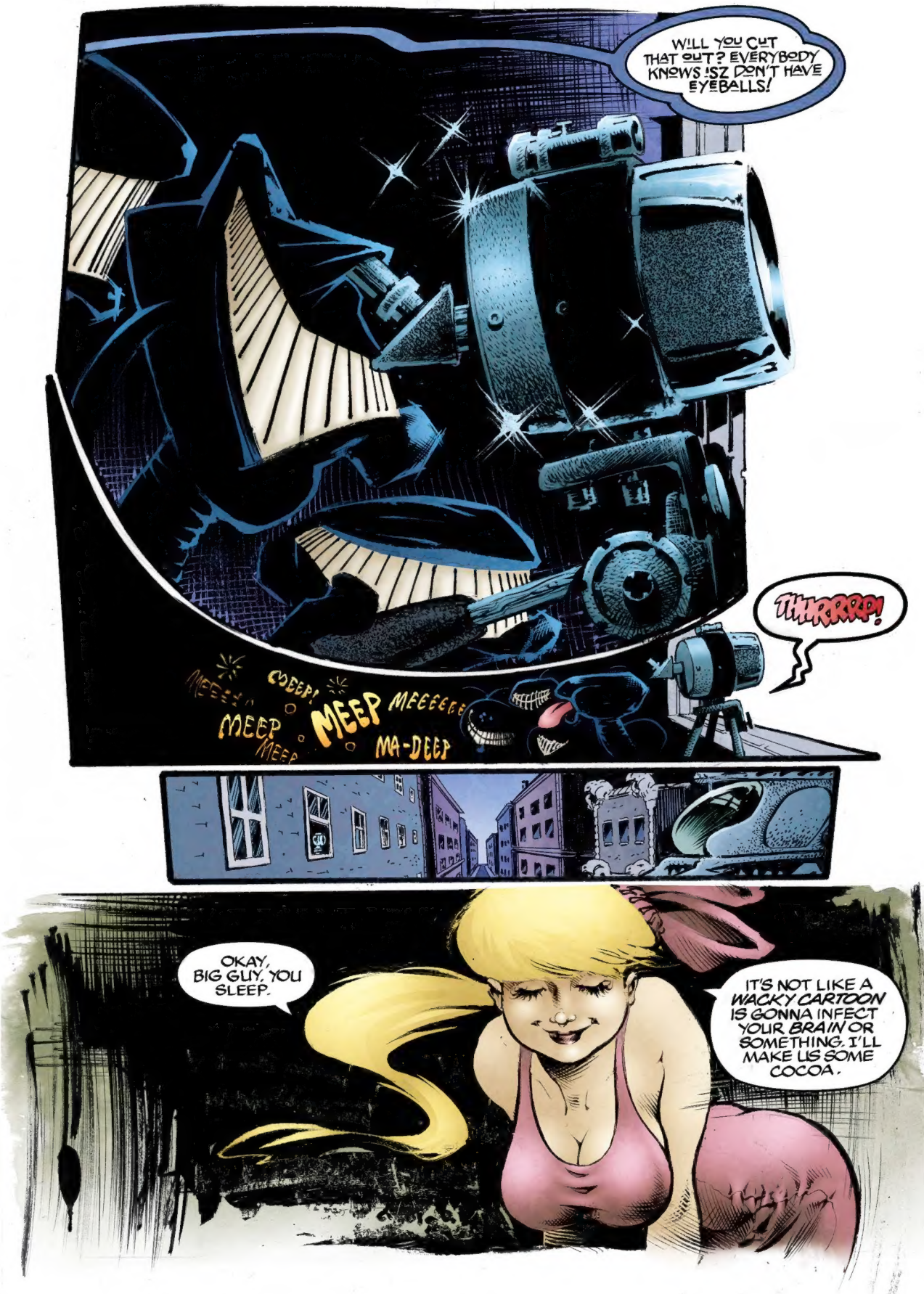
"AHHH. PERFECT. THAT'S HIS ACCURSED CLAW... THE ONE THAT ALMOST...

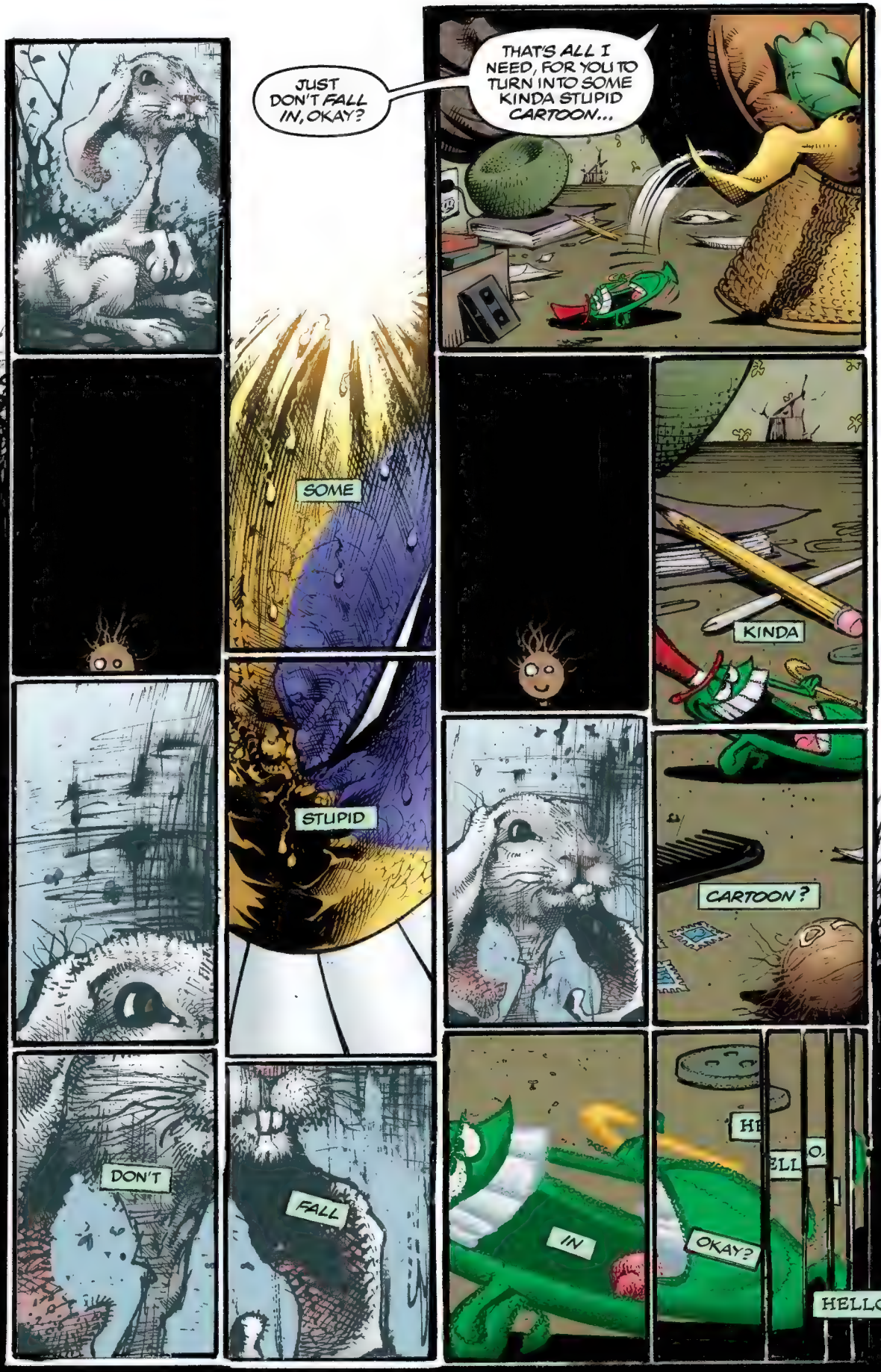


"NOW I WANT TO SEE HIS OTHER CLAW, TO BROOD OVER HIM AS HE SLEEPS, JUST AS HE BROODED OVER ME AS I LAY HELPLESS, POWERLESS BEFORE HIS BESTIAL WRATH!"
HEY, MAXX! WAKE UP!
"BRING THE SCANNER DOWN!
"THAT'S BETTER. NOW I CAN THINK.

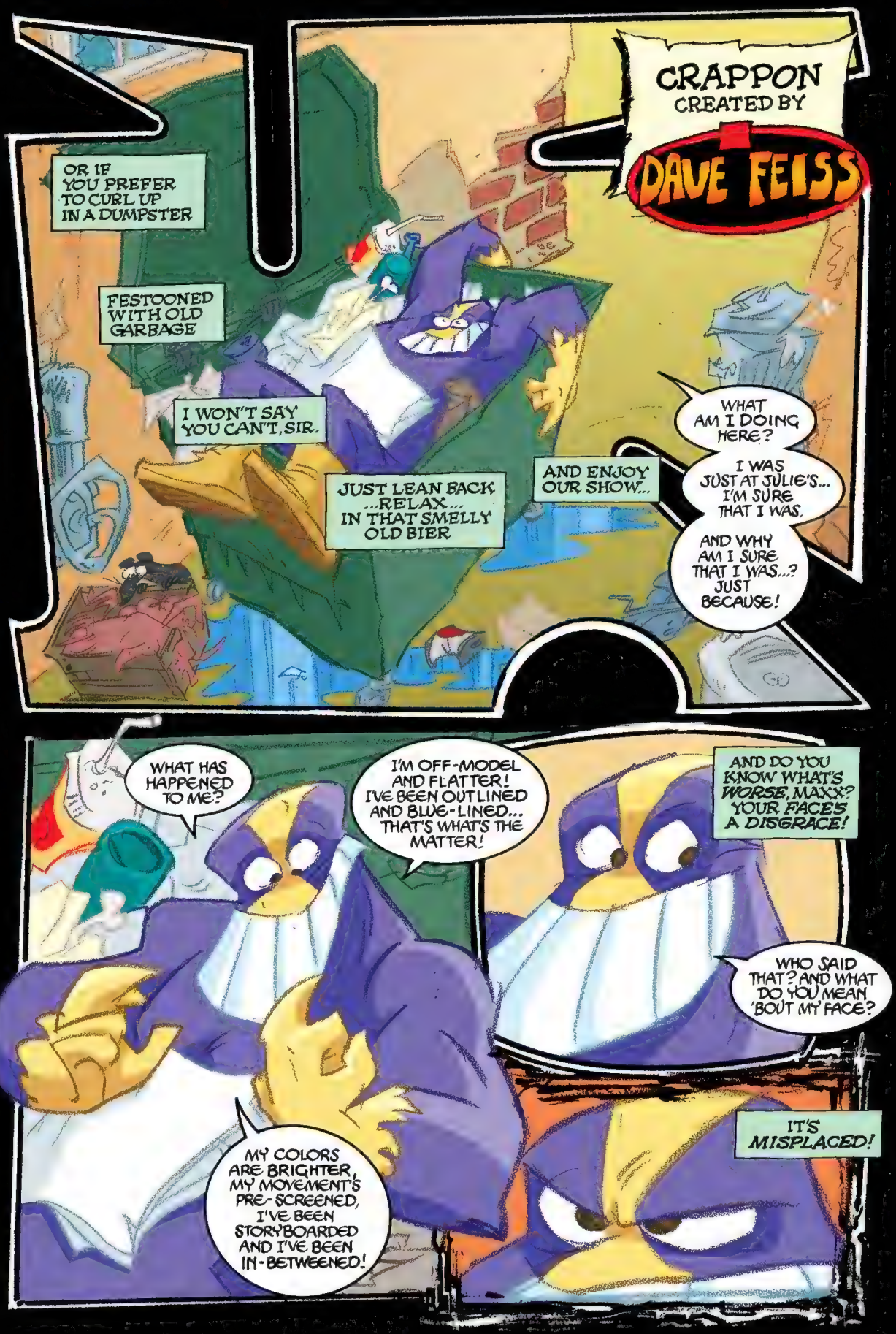

"NO, YOU IDIOT! THAT'S HER OTHER FOOT!
"NOT UP! DOWN... DOWN!
"NOW I CAN PLAN!"

IT'S THE SAME *EVERY* SATURDAY MORNING. YOU CURL UP WATCHING *CARTOONS* AND FALL *ASLEEP!*
AND WHAT CARTOONS? THE *CRAPPON INNA HAT!* MUST BE THE STUPIDEST CARTOON EVER MADE!
I MEAN... "*THE CRAPPON INNA HAT* TEAMS UP WITH *JEAN-PAUL SARTRE* TO FIGHT *NAUSEA!*" CARTOONS TODAY ARE SO PRETENTIOUS!
AHA!
I COULD BLOW THEM BOTH AWAY FROM HERE! NOT THAT I WOULD, OF COURSE. I DON'T OPERATE THAT WAY! STILL...


WILL YOU CUT THAT OUT? EVERYBODY KNOWS ISZ DON'T HAVE EYEBALLS!
THHRRRRP!
MEEP
MEEEEEE
MEEP
MEEP
MA-DEEP
OKAY, BIG GUY, YOU SLEEP.
IT'S NOT LIKE A WACKY CARTOON IS GONNA INFECT YOUR BRAIN OR SOMETHING. I'LL MAKE US SOME COCOA.


JUST DON'T FALL IN, OKAY?
THAT'S ALL I NEED, FOR YOU TO TURN INTO SOME KINDA STUPID CARTOON...
SOME
KINDA
STUPID
CARTOON?
DON'T
FALL
IN
OKAY?
HELLO

YES, HELLO TO ME...
AND HELLO TO YOU!
I AM THE CRAPPON
I LIVE IN THE ZOO!
AND IT'S SUCH A FRIENDLY OLD ZOO
AND SUCH FUN...
YOU ALL WILL ENJOY IT... YES, YOU WILL, EVERY ONE!
EVERY TWO WILL ENJOY IT... EVERY THREE... EVERY FOUR...
SO COME VISIT MY ZOO, CURL UP ON THE FLOOR
WE'LL BE FRIENDLY AS BUGS... SO COME ON, I IMPLORE!


CRAPPON
CREATED BY
DAVE FEISS
OR, IF YOU PREFER TO CURL UP IN A DUMPSTER
FESTOONED WITH OLD GARBAGE
I WON'T SAY YOU CAN'T, SIR.
JUST LEAN BACK ...RELAX... IN THAT SMELLY OLD BIER
AND ENJOY OUR SHOW...
WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
I WAS JUST AT JULIE'S... I'M SURE THAT I WAS.
AND WHY AM I SURE THAT I WAS...? JUST BECAUSE!
WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?
I'M OFF-MODEL AND FLATTER! I'VE BEEN OUTLINED AND BLUE-LINED... THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER!
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S WORSE, MAXX? YOUR FACE'S A DISGRACE!
WHO SAID THAT? AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'BOUT MY FACE?
IT'S MISPLACED!
MY COLORS ARE BRIGHTER, MY MOVEMENT'S PRE-SCREENED, I'VE BEEN STORYBOARDED AND I'VE BEEN IN-BETWEENED!

MY FACE...?
IT'S RIGHT HERE, IT IS UNDER THIS MASK...
JUST BE VERY SURE... THAT'S THE MOST THAT I ASK!
I AM SURE... SAY, YOU'RE A FISH, IN A BOWL MADE OF GLASS!
YEP, THAT'S THE PLOT... NOW I'D SAY YOU SHOULD RUN!
PRETTY WISE! WHO ARE THESE GUYS, SON?
THEY'RE YOUR FEARS, THEY'RE YOUR TERRORS AND THEY LIVE IN A CAVE...
IN THE PIT OF YOUR PSYCHE AND THEY ALL ARE NAMED DAVE!
ALL ARE NAMED DAVE? WHAT DO THEY WANT WITH ME?
TO RIP OFF THAT MASK, SO YOUR FACE ALL CAN SEE!
MY FACE? NO! THEY CAN'T! THEY CAN'T DO THAT TO MEeeeeee

I'M AFRAID THAT THEY CAN. AND I'M A GUY WHO SHOULD KNOW.
YOU SEE, I'M THE CRAPPON... AND THIS IS MY SHOW!
AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT 'NEATH THAT MASK... I JUST KNOW!
THAT'S NOT TRUE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST ANIMATED!
BUT I'M JUST AS REAL AS YOU ARE... MAYBE REALER.
EACH LINE THAT DEFINES ME IS CAREFULLY WEIGHTED.
THIS IS JUST A MAD JAIL AND YOU'RE THE MAD JAILER.
I AM THE MAXX! I CANNOT BE HELD!
BY ONE WHO'S DECIPHERED WHAT'S UNDER YOUR MASK! DO YOU WANT TO KNOW...? WELL, DO YOU? JUST ASK!
SUCH MINOR REBELLIONS ARE EASILY QUELLED...

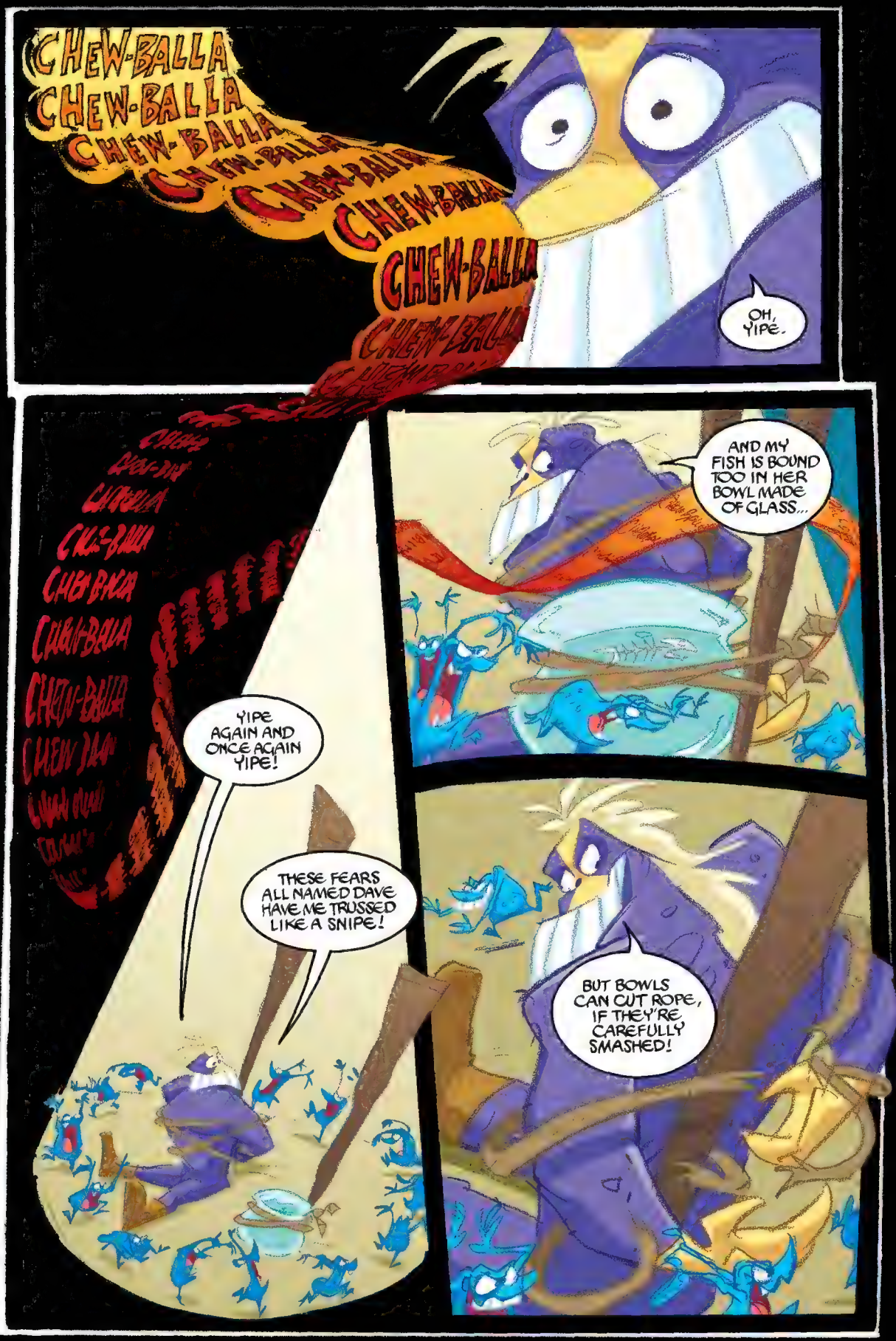
I KNOW IT ALL, AND TO PROVE THAT I DO, THIS DUDE'S THE STRAIGHT SKINNY. HE'S HEAD OF MY CREW.
AND THIS GUY'S THE POOP...
AND THIS ONE'S THE SNOT. I'D SAY HE'S THE DOPE, BUT HE'S NOT...
NO, HE'S SNOT!
FRIEND FISH, THEY ARE TRYING TO TEAR OFF MY MASK... TO SHOW ME THE THING THAT I'M FRIGHTENED TO ASK... PLEASE GIVE ME ADVICE. I'M BEGGING YOU, PLEASE...
THAT FISH IS YOUR CONSCIENCE, AND SHE'S WHEEZED HER LAST WHEEZE!
YOU'RE ALL ALONE, MAXX... YOUR MISSION'S FORGOT. THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN REMEMBER IS SNOT! YOUR FACE IS A FIGMENT OF A MAN WITH NO HEAD!
YOUR MASK IT IS EVIL AND YOUR FISH... IT IS DEAD!

MY MASK IS NOT EVIL! IT'S A CLEVER DISGUISE!
I CHOSE IT TO HIDE FROM THE PRYINGEST EYES.
SO I COULD DO GOOD! AND MY FISH IS NOT DEAD!
MY FISH IS ALIVE!
THIS IS NOT IN MY HEAD!
EEEKS! MY FEARS HAVE RETURNED!
IT IS TIME THAT I BOOKED!
I COULD FACE MY FACE! IT IS TIME THAT I LOOKED!
BUT MY FACE ISN'T HUMAN, OF THAT I AM SURE!
IT'S THE MOST HORRID, HORRIBLE THING TO OCCUR, AND IT'S COVERED BY SCALES OR IT'S COVERED BY FUR!

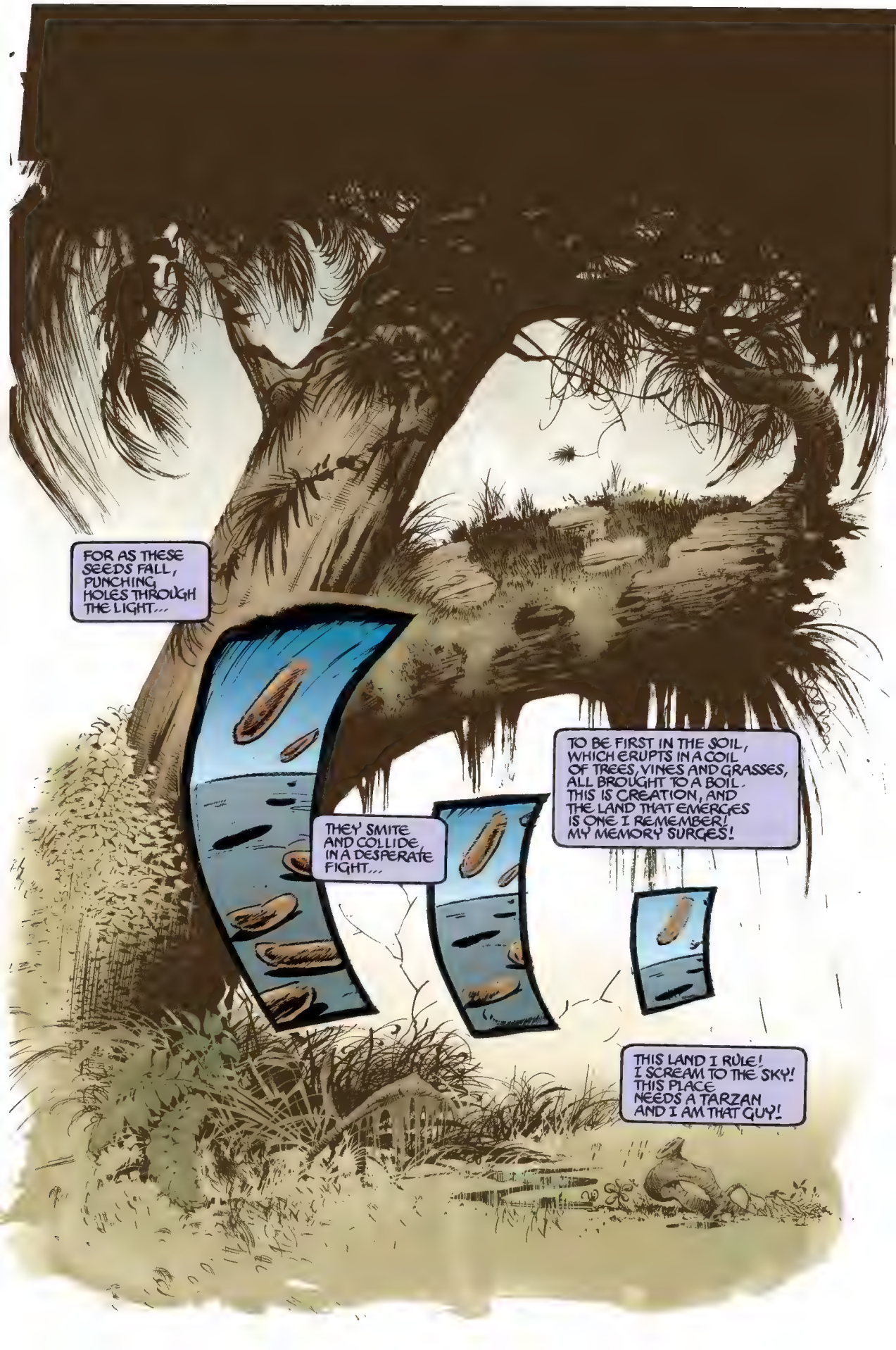
IT COULD BE A BEAR'S HEAD
OR MAYBE AN OWL!
IT COULD LOOK LIKE FISH EGGS, LAID ON WITH A TROWEL!
SOMETHING GROTESQUE... SOMETHING MOST FOUL!
LIKE THE FINS OF A SHARK WRAPPED IN SOMEBODY'S BOWEL!

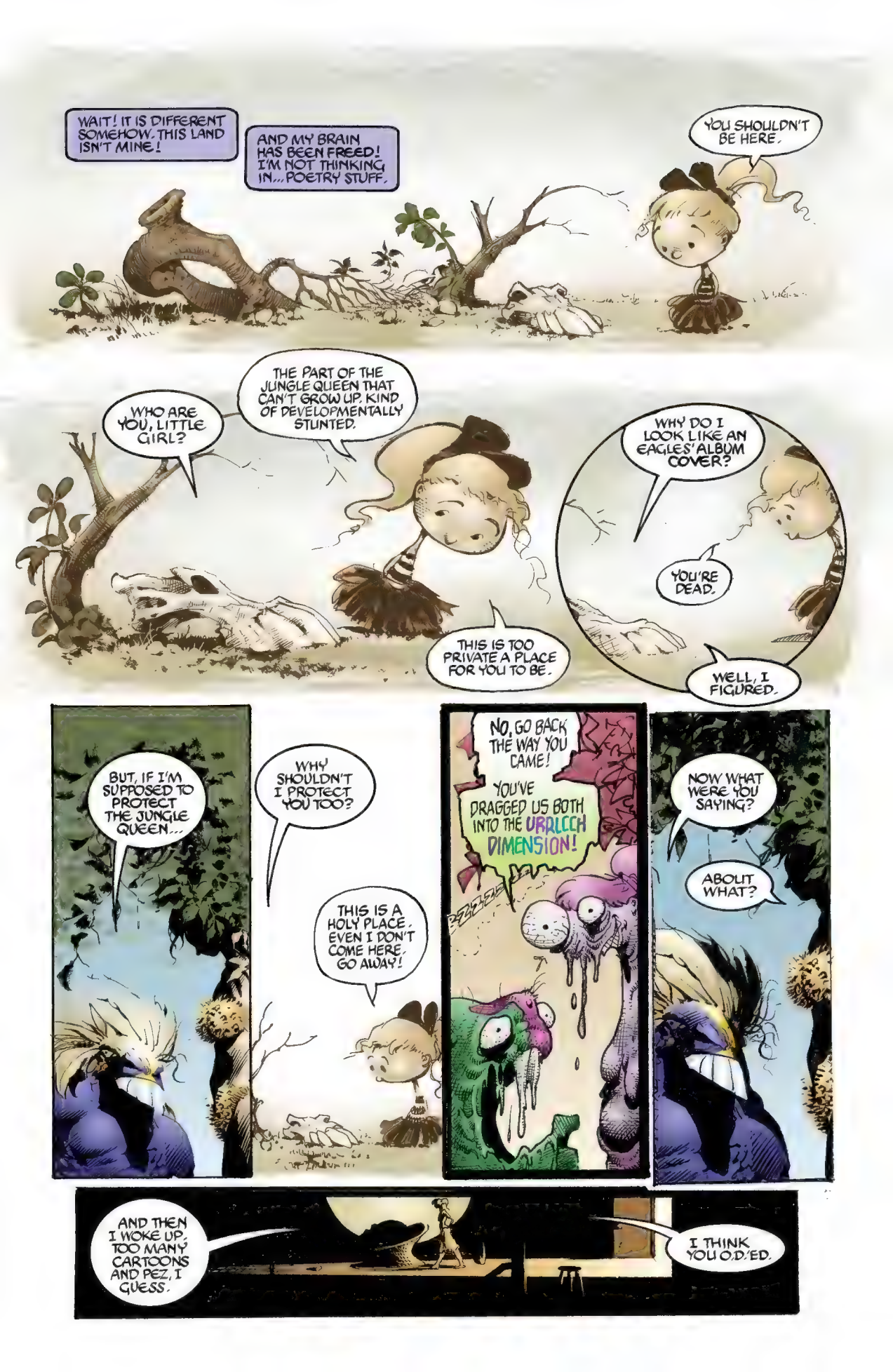
THIS IS GETTING QUITE DEEP, AND I'M STARTING TO FEAR... I'LL BE DROWNED IN AN OCEAN OF DIET ROOT BEER...
DIET ROOT BEER?
YES, THAT'S WHAT IT SEEMED.
I'VE FLASHED BACK TO MY DUMPSTER. SO ALL THIS WAS A DREAM?
NO, I GUESS NOT. FOR THESE GUYS ARE STILL HERE...
STILL RIPPING...
AND TRIPPING ME, AND WHAT I FEAR...

...IS IF THESE GUYS KILL ME...
...AND MAKE ME ROLL OVER...
...I'LL BE JUST AS DEAD...
...BACK ON JULIE'S OLD SOFA.

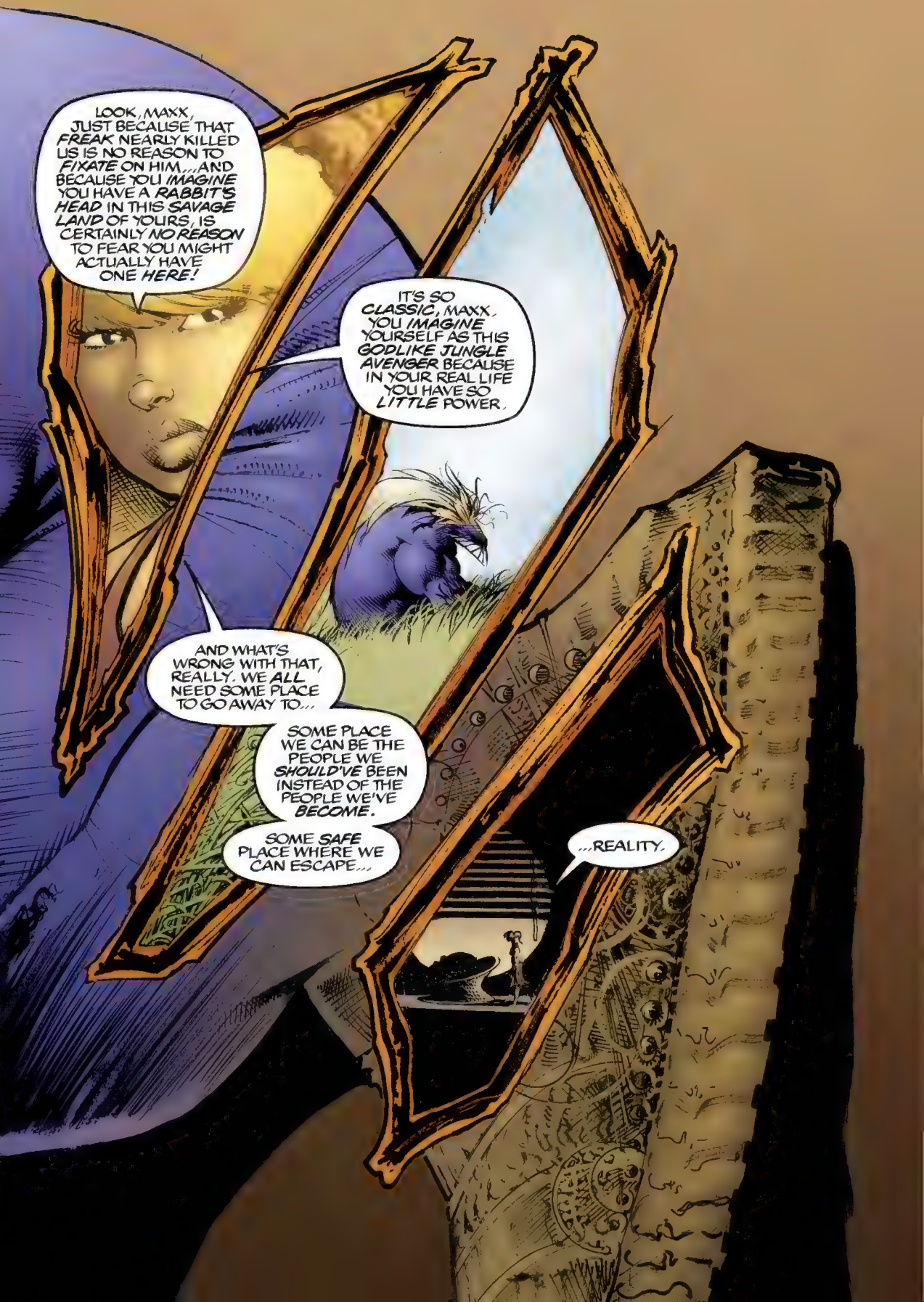

CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
CHEW-BALLA
OH, YIPE.
AND MY FISH IS BOUND TOO IN HER BOWL MADE OF GLASS...
YIPE AGAIN AND ONCE AGAIN YIPE!
THESE FEARS ALL NAMED DAVE HAVE ME TRUSSED LIKE A SNIPE!
BUT BOWLS CAN CUT ROPE, IF THEY'RE CAREFULLY SMASHED!

I'M SURROUNDED BY FEARS. THERE'S JUST ONE THING TO DO!
I MUST FACE WHAT THE FEARS MAKE ME FEARFUL TO DO.
I MUST RIP OFF THIS MASK! IT IS TIME THAT I KNEW...
...WHAT LIES BENEATH... IT IS BEANS?
IT IS PODS! WHAT A STRANGE THING TO DO.
TO KEEP SEEDS IN MY FACE...AND HOW ODD!


FOR AS THESE SEEDS FALL, PUNCHING HOLES THROUGH THE LIGHT...
THEY SMITE AND COLLIDE, IN A DESPERATE FIGHT...
TO BE FIRST IN THE SOIL, WHICH ERUPTS IN A COIL OF TREES, VINES AND GRASSES, ALL BROUGHT TO A BOIL. THIS IS CREATION, AND THE LAND THAT EMERGES IS ONE I REMEMBER! MY MEMORY SURGES!
THIS LAND I RULE! I SCREAM TO THE SKY! THIS PLACE NEEDS A TARZAN AND I AM THAT GUY!


WAIT! IT IS DIFFERENT SOMEHOW. THIS LAND ISN'T MINE!
AND MY BRAIN HAS BEEN FREED! I'M NOT THINKING IN... POETRY STUFF.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
WHO ARE YOU, LITTLE GIRL?
THE PART OF THE JUNGLE QUEEN THAT CAN'T GROW UP. KIND OF DEVELOPMENTALLY STUNTED.
THIS IS TOO PRIVATE A PLACE FOR YOU TO BE.
WHY DO I LOOK LIKE AN EAGLES' ALBUM COVER?
YOU'RE DEAD.
WELL, I FIGURED.
BUT, IF I'M SUPPOSED TO PROTECT THE JUNGLE QUEEN...
WHY SHOULDN'T I PROTECT YOU TOO?
THIS IS A HOLY PLACE. EVEN I DON'T COME HERE. GO AWAY!
NO, GO BACK THE WAY YOU CAME!
YOU'VE DRAGGED US BOTH INTO THE URALEEH DIMENSION!
NOW WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?
ABOUT WHAT?
AND THEN I WOKE UP. TOO MANY CARTOONS AND PEZ, I GUESS.
I THINK YOU O.D.'ED.

FUNNY. BUT I KEEP SEEING THAT DOLL SHE MADE OF MR. GONE. AND BE-HEADED. THAT MUST MEAN SOMETHING!
AND THE THINGS THAT COULD BE UNDER MY MASK...

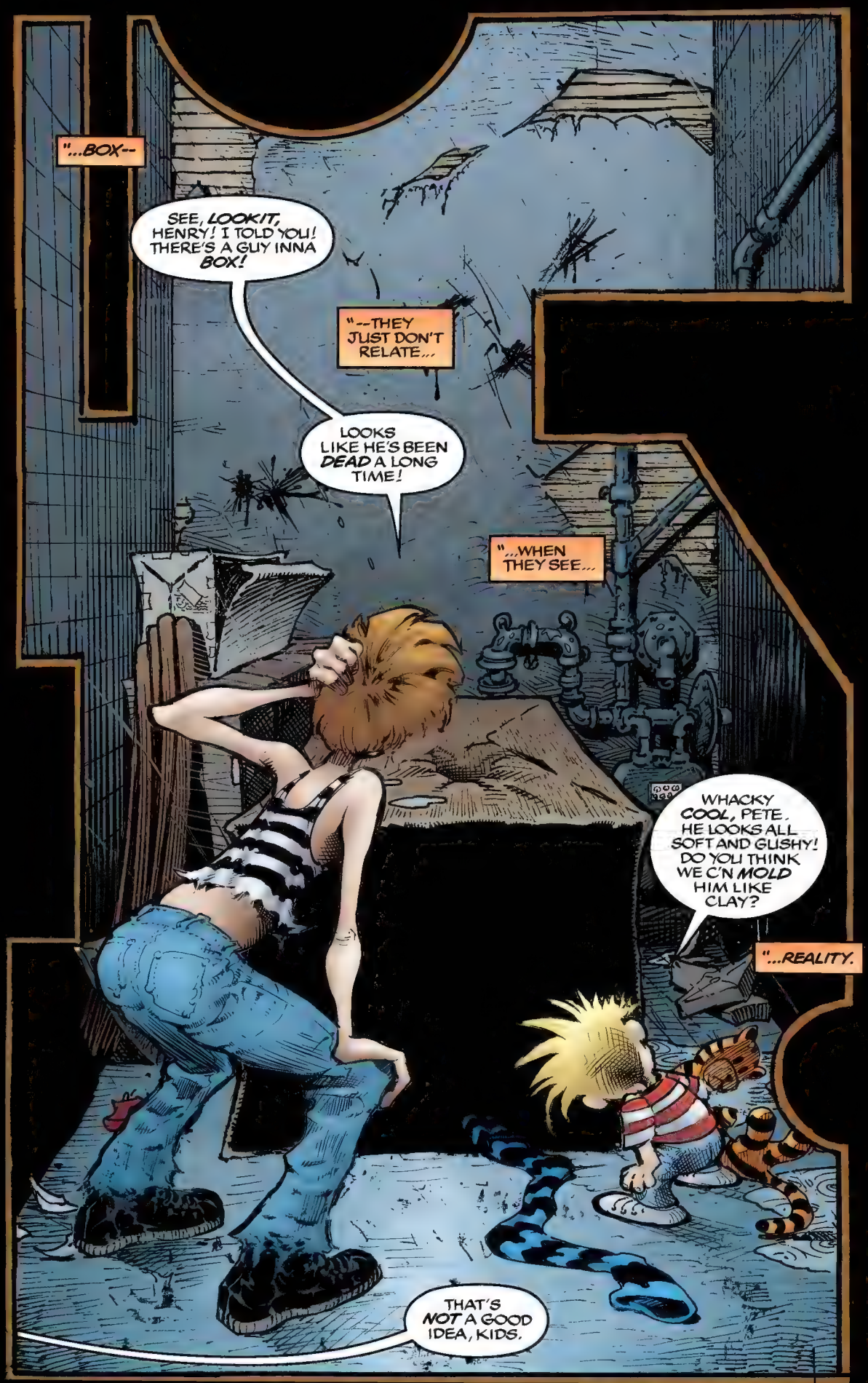

LOOK, MAXX, JUST BECAUSE THAT FREAK NEARLY KILLED US IS NO REASON TO FIXATE ON HIM... AND BECAUSE YOU IMAGINE YOU HAVE A RABBIT'S HEAD IN THIS SAVAGE LAND OF YOURS, IS CERTAINLY NO REASON TO FEAR YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE ONE HERE!
IT'S SO CLASSIC, MAXX, YOU IMAGINE YOURSELF AS THIS GODLIKE JUNGLE AVENGER BECAUSE IN YOUR REAL LIFE YOU HAVE SO LITTLE POWER.
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT, REALLY. WE ALL NEED SOME PLACE TO GO AWAY TO...
SOME PLACE WE CAN BE THE PEOPLE WE SHOULD'VE BEEN INSTEAD OF THE PEOPLE WE'VE BECOME.
SOME SAFE PLACE WHERE WE CAN ESCAPE...
...REALITY.

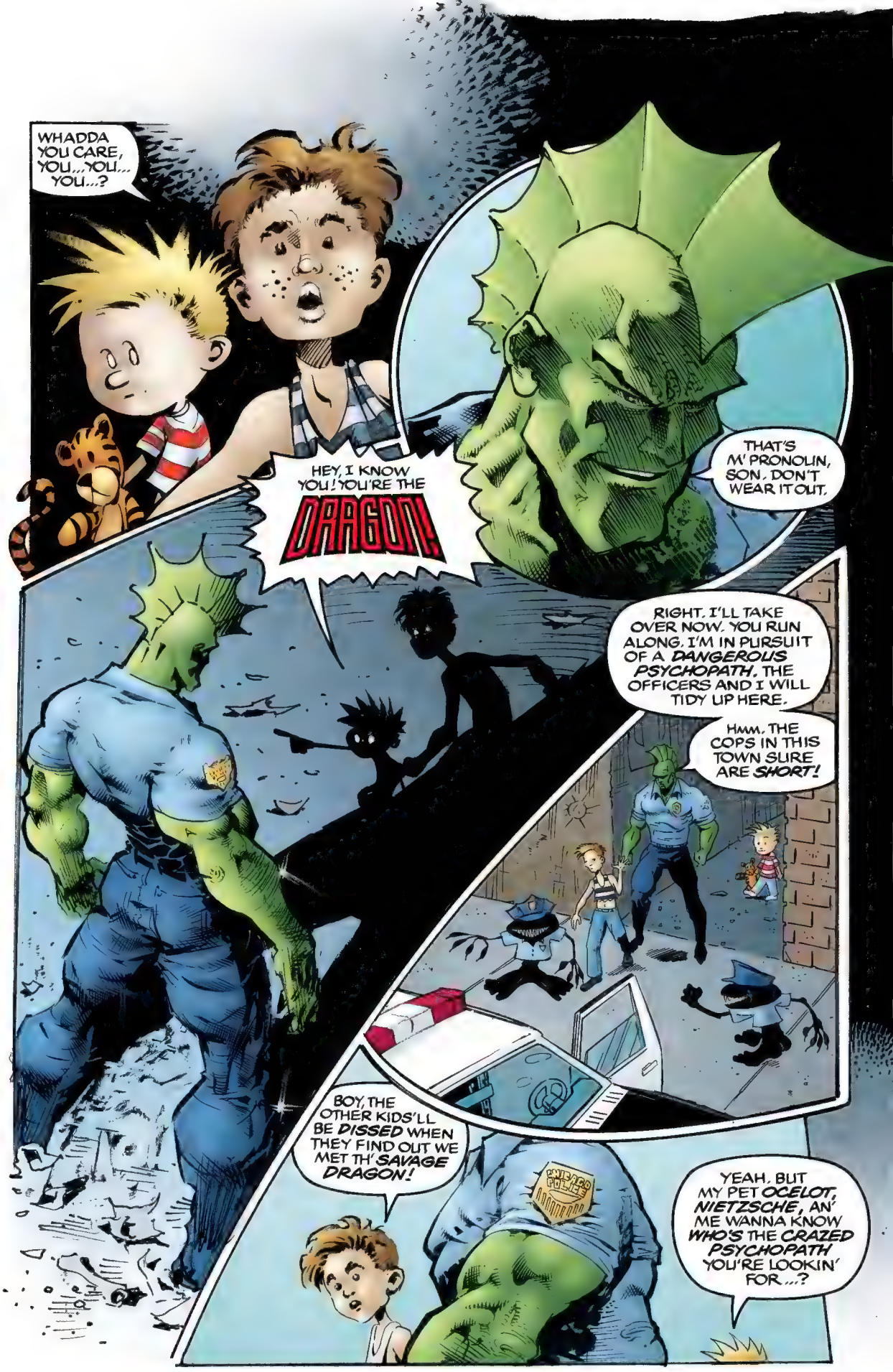
HIDE...
I KNOW THERE ARE THINGS I'D LIKE TO HIDE FROM...

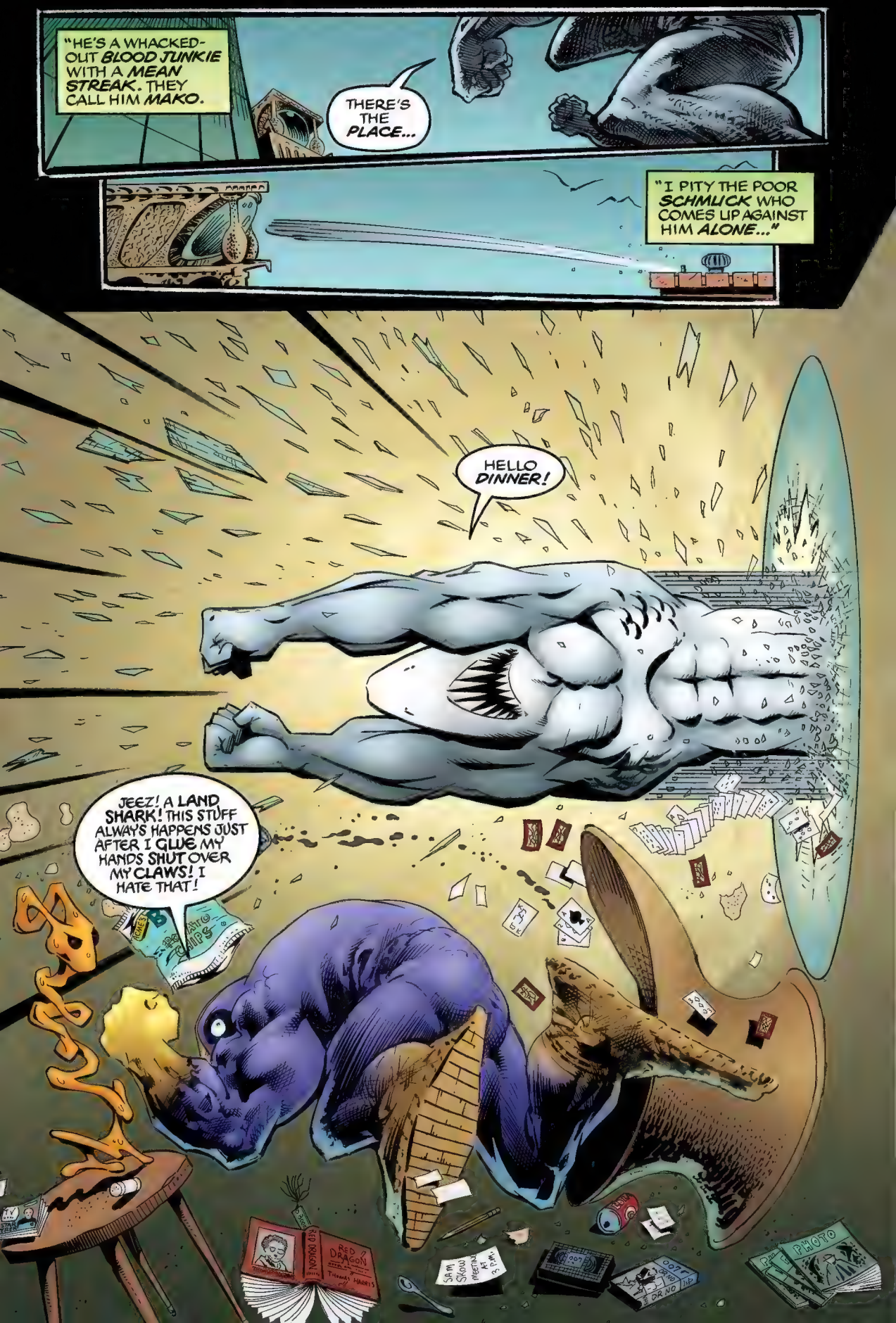
MY MASK... I CAN FEEL IT CRAWLING...
shhhhh
PLEASE... MAKE... IT... STOP...
JUST REST NOW. IT'S OKAY... S'OKAY...

Part Two
THE MASK

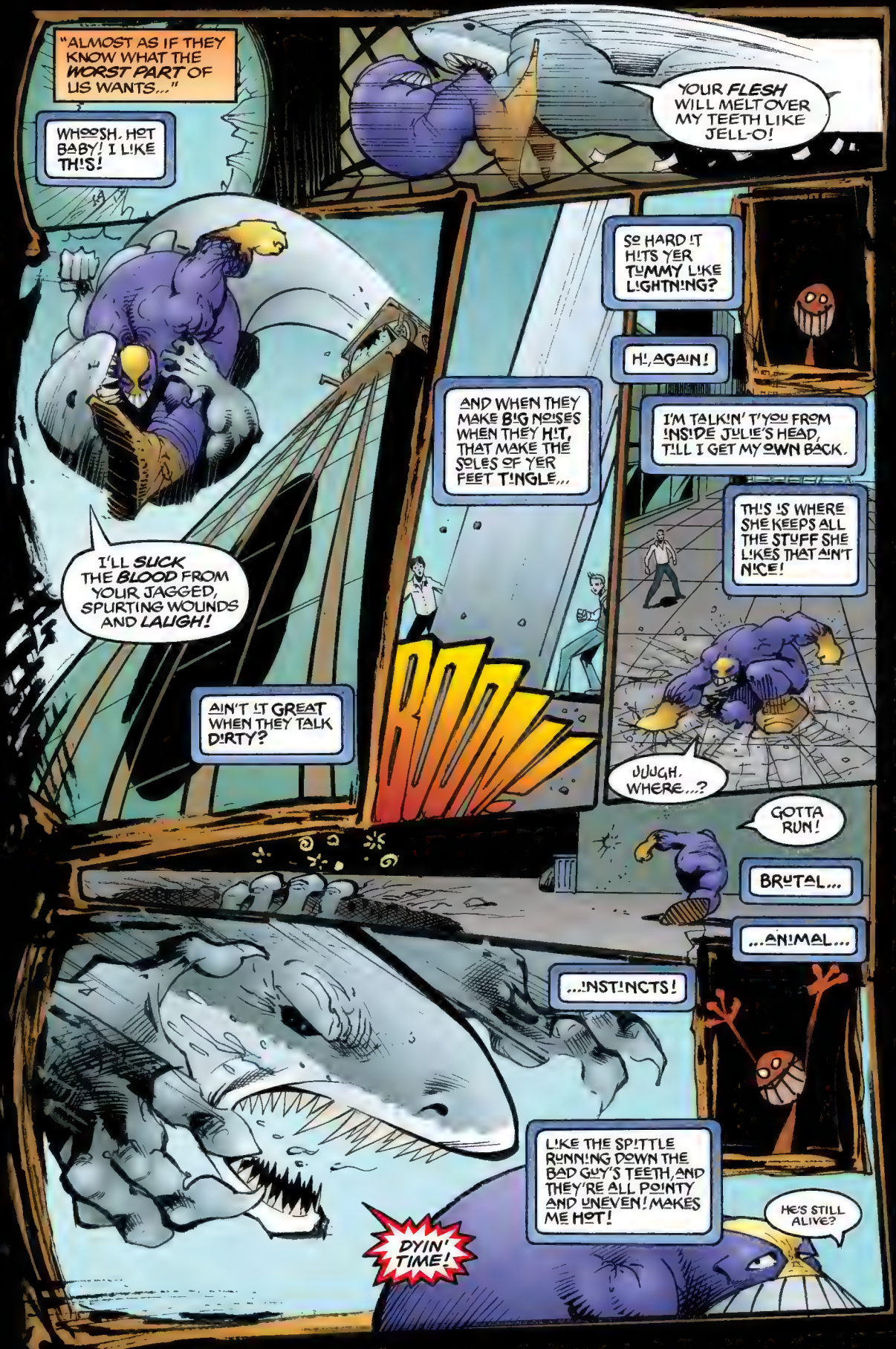
I HOPE MAXX WILL BE ALL RIGHT AT HOME. HE'S REPAIRING A LAMP FOR ME. LAST TIME HE GLUED HIS HANDS SHUT! HIS CLAWS 'N' EVERYTHING!
BRRR! HOW CAN YOU SLEEP WITH THAT... THING HANGING AROUND YOUR HOUSE? HE'S SO... SCARY! VIOLENT! UNCOOL!
Aw, MAXX IS OKAY. HE'S SAVED MY LIFE A COUPLE OF TIMES. I THINK HE'S GOT A GENTLE SOUL.
YEAH. LIKE I'M CONSTANTLY CONFUSING MAXX WITH MOTHER TERESA.
DON'T YOU THINK SOME OF THAT'S IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER?
BESIDES, I COULDN'T SLEEP BEFORE I MET HIM. NOT FOR YEARS. I STILL CAN ONLY GET A COUPLE HOURS A NIGHT.
YEAH, I'M LIKE TOTALLY WEIRDED OUT MYSELF AT NIGHT. I THINK IT'S ALL THIS VIOLENCE WE LIVE WITH. IT MAKES US JUMPY AS CATS! MOVIES... TV... VIDEO GAMES...
I MEAN HERE WE ARE, JUST HANGING OUT, GETTING A TAN--HARDLY GLAMOROUS, BUT SOMEONE COULD READ PIN-UPS JUST IN THE WAY I'M STANDING HERE.
MAYBE. BUT I DON'T WANT SARAH TO GROW UP IN A WORLD FILLED WITH VIOLENCE AND FEAR AND GENDER HATRED.
SHE'S AT THE HOSPITAL TODAY PICKING UP ONE OF HER FRIENDS WHO WAS ATTACKED BY THAT SERIAL RAPIST A FEW MONTHS AGO.
MY WOMEN'S GROUP IS GOING TO BE MONITORING TV SHOWS FOR VIOLENT CONTENT...
LIKE, I'M NO CENSOR, JULIE, BUT KIDS SEE SO MUCH BAD STUFF IN THAT...

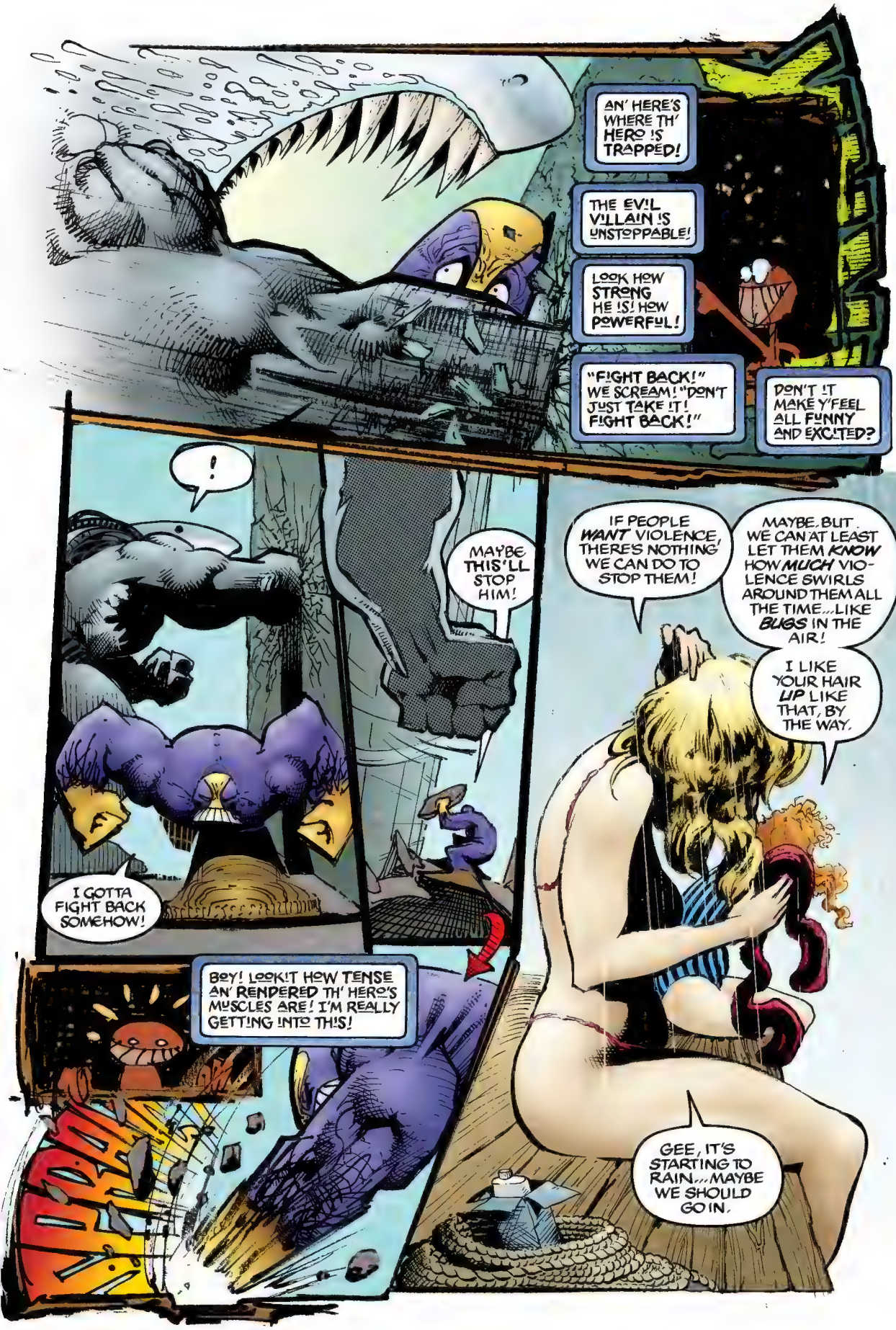

"...BOX--
SEE, LOOKIT, HENRY! I TOLD YOU! THERE'S A GUY INNA BOX!
"--THEY JUST DON'T RELATE...
LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN DEAD A LONG TIME!
"...WHEN THEY SEE...
WHACKY COOL, PETE. HE LOOKS ALL SOFT AND GUSHY! DO YOU THINK WE C'N MOLD HIM LIKE CLAY?
"...REALITY.
THAT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA, KIDS.


WHADDA YOU CARE, YOU...YOU... YOU...?
THAT'S M' PRONOLIN, SON. DON'T WEAR IT OUT.
HEY, I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE THE DRAGON!
RIGHT. I'LL TAKE OVER NOW. YOU RUN ALONG. I'M IN PURSUIT OF A DANGEROUS PSYCHOPATH. THE OFFICERS AND I WILL TIDY UP HERE.
Hmm. THE COPS IN THIS TOWN SURE ARE SHORT!
BOY, THE OTHER KIDS'LL BE DISSED WHEN THEY FIND OUT WE MET TH' SAVAGE DRAGON!
CHICAGO POLICE
YEAH, BUT MY PET OCELOT, NIETZSCHE, AN' ME WANNA KNOW WHO'S THE CRAZED PSYCHOPATH YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR...?

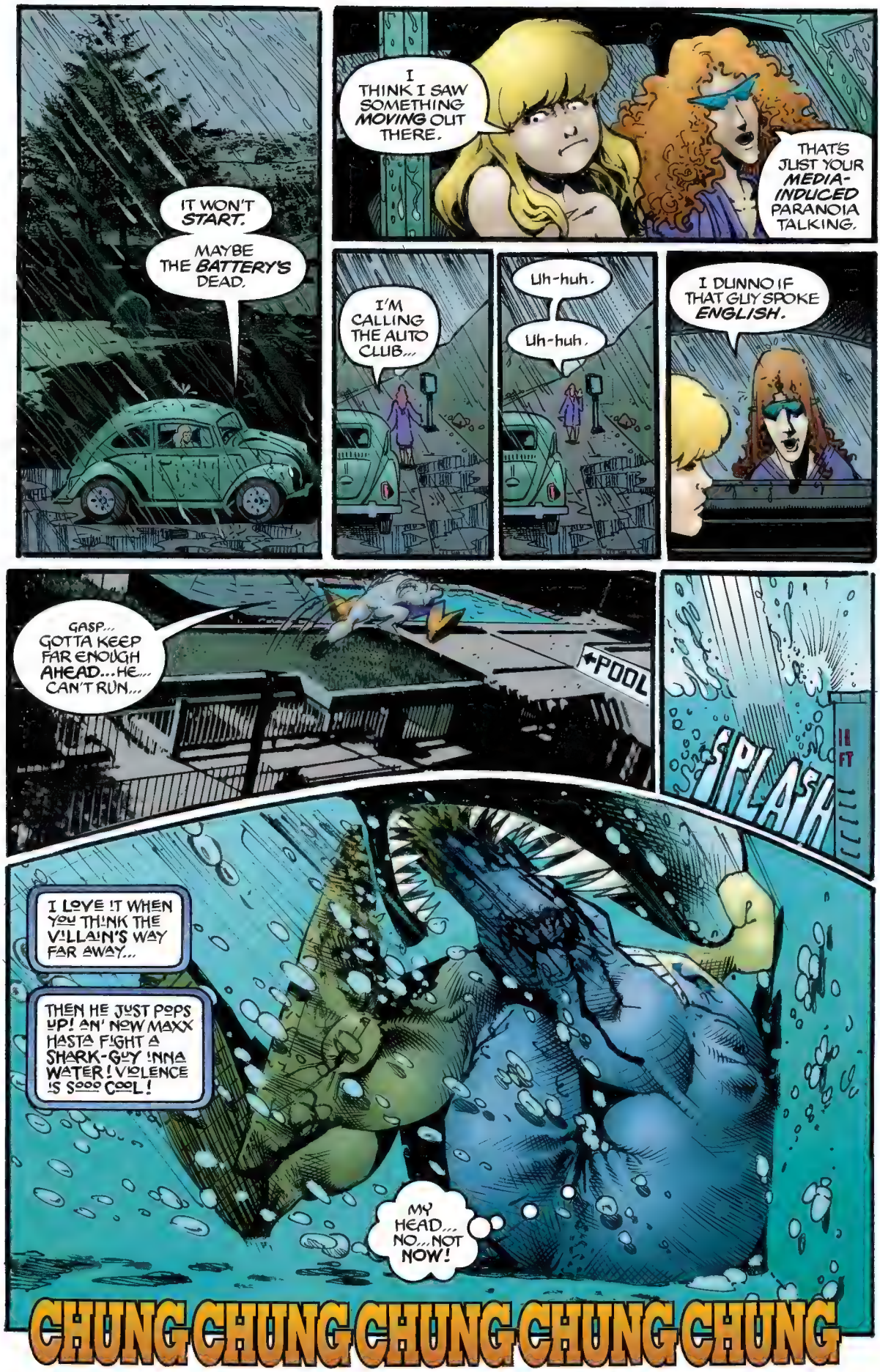

"HE'S A WHACKED-OUT BLOOD JUNKIE WITH A MEAN STREAK. THEY CALL HIM MAKO.
THERE'S THE PLACE...
"I PITY THE POOR SCHMLICK WHO COMES UP AGAINST HIM ALONE..."
HELLO DINNER!
JEEZ! A LAND SHARK! THIS STUFF ALWAYS HAPPENS JUST AFTER I GLUE MY HANDS SHUT OVER MY CLAWS! I HATE THAT!
RED DRAGON
Thomas Harris
PHOTO

WHAM!
YOU DUCKED ON PURPOSE, MAUVE-BOY! NOW I'M GONNA DO YOU SLOW!
SO, YOU REALLY WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN COUNTING "ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIONS" IN SILLY COP SHOWS?
I KNOW SOME OF THESE GROUPS ARE FANATICS, JULIE. BUT WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
I MEAN ONLY A COUPLE HUGE CORPO-RATIONS OWN MOST OF THE MEDIA IN THIS COUNTRY AND THEY KEEP SHOVELING INCREASING AMOUNTS OF VIOLENCE AT US...


"ALMOST AS IF THEY KNOW WHAT THE WORST PART OF LIS WANTS..."
WHOOSH. HOT BABY! I LIKE TH!S!
I'LL SUCK THE BLOOD FROM YOUR JAGGED, SPURTING WOUNDS AND LAUGH!
AIN'T !T GREAT WHEN THEY TALK D!RTY?
BOOM!
YOUR FLESH WILL MELT OVER MY TEETH LIKE JELL-O!
SO HARD !T H!TS YER TUMMY L!KE L!GHTN!NG?
H!, AGAIN!
AND WHEN THEY MAKE BIG NOISES WHEN THEY H!T, THAT MAKE THE SOLES OF YER FEET T!NGLE...
I'M TALKIN' T'YOU FROM !NSIDE JULIE'S HEAD, T!LL I GET MY OWN BACK.
TH!S !S WHERE SHE KEEPS ALL THE STUFF SHE L!KES THAT AIN'T N!CE!
UUUGH. WHERE...?
GOTTA RUN!
BRUTAL...
...AN!MAL...
...!NST!NCTS!
L!KE THE SP!TTLE RUNN!NG DOWN THE BAD GUY'S TEETH, AND THEY'RE ALL POINTY AND UNEVEN! MAKES ME HOT!
HE'S STILL ALIVE?
DYIN' TIME!


AN' HERE'S WHERE TH' HERO !S TRAPPED!
THE EV!L V!LLA!N !S UNSTOPPABLE!
LOOK HOW STRONG HE !S! HOW POWERFUL!
"F!GHT BACK!" WE SCREAM! "DON'T JUST TAKE !T! F!GHT BACK!"
DON'T !T MAKE Y'FEEL ALL FUNNY AND EXC!TED?
!
MAYBE THIS'LL STOP HIM!
I GOTTA FIGHT BACK SOMEHOW!
BOY! LOOK!T HOW TENSE AN' RENDERED TH' HERO'S MUSCLES ARE! I'M REALLY GETT!NG !NTO TH!S!
IF PEOPLE WANT VIOLENCE, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM!
MAYBE. BUT WE CAN AT LEAST LET THEM KNOW HOW MUCH VIOLENCE SWIRLS AROUND THEM ALL THE TIME... LIKE BUGS IN THE AIR!
I LIKE YOUR HAIR UP LIKE THAT, BY THE WAY.
GEE, IT'S STARTING TO RAIN... MAYBE WE SHOULD GO IN.

I KNOW THIS GUY! HE'S ONE OF SAVAGE DRAGON'S THIRD RATE VILLAINS!
KKRR
GREAT. I DON'T EVEN GET TO FIGHT OTHER GUY'S VILLAINS... I HAVE TO FIGHT THE LACKEYS OF OTHER GUY'S VILLAINS!
OUCH... I THINK I CUT MY FOOT BACK THERE!
BLOOD! SMELL BLOOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD
HEY!
NO FAIR!
EAT
SORRY, TOOTH-BOY! I'M OUTTA HERE!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD
WHAM
BLOODBLOOD BLOODBLOOD BLOOOOO...!

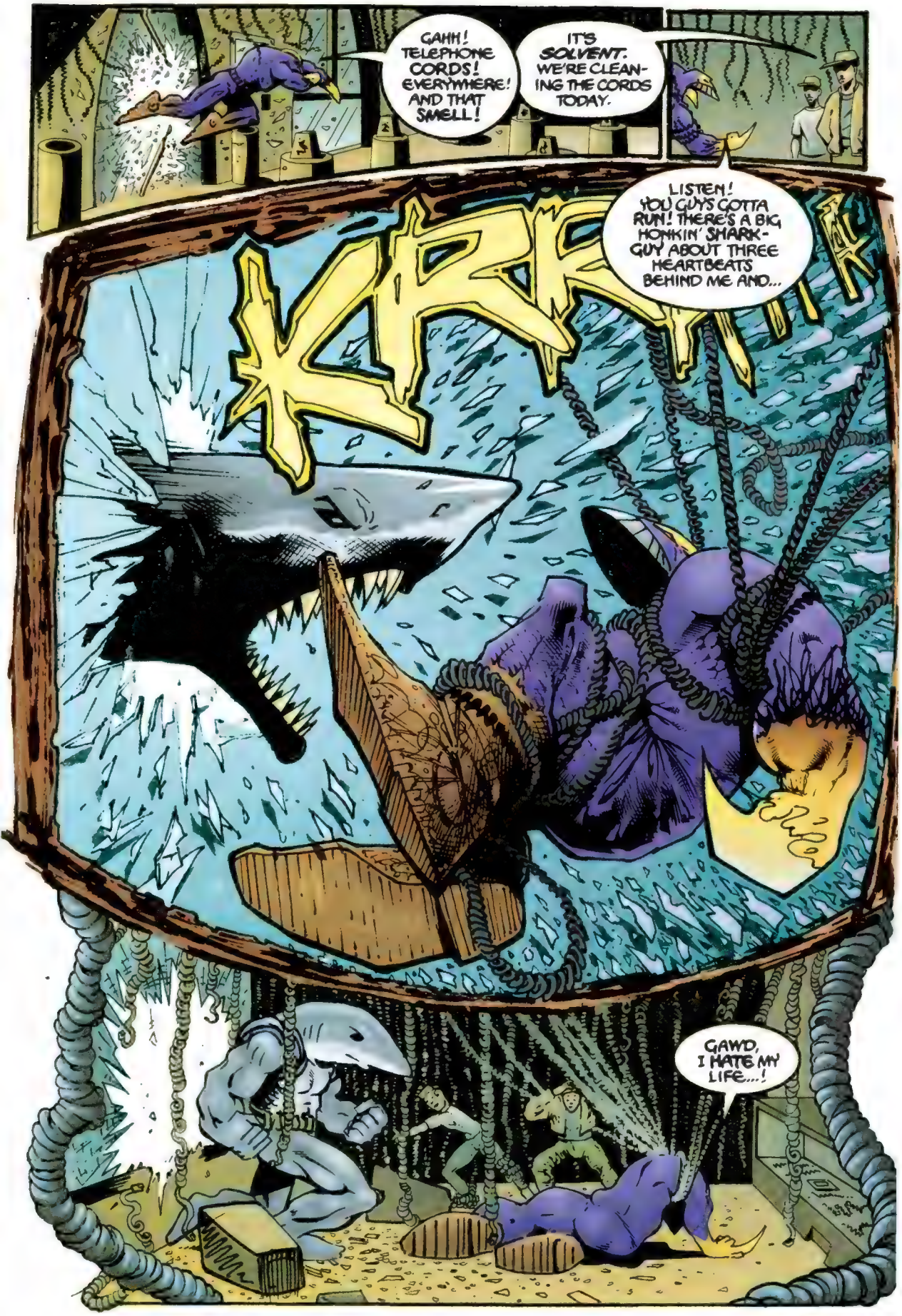

IT WON'T START.
MAYBE THE BATTERY'S DEAD.
I THINK I SAW SOMETHING MOVING OUT THERE.
THAT'S JUST YOUR MEDIA-INDUCED PARANOIA TALKING.
I'M CALLING THE AUTO CLUB...
Uh-huh.
Uh-huh.
I DUNNO IF THAT GUY SPOKE ENGLISH.
GASP... GOTTA KEEP FAR ENOUGH AHEAD...HE... CAN'T RUN...
POOL
SPLASH
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU THINK THE VILLAIN'S WAY FAR AWAY...
THEN HE JUST POPS UP! AN' NOW MAXX HASTA FIGHT A SHARK-GUY INNA WATER! VIOLENCE IS SOOO COOL!
MY HEAD... NO... NOT NOW!
CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG

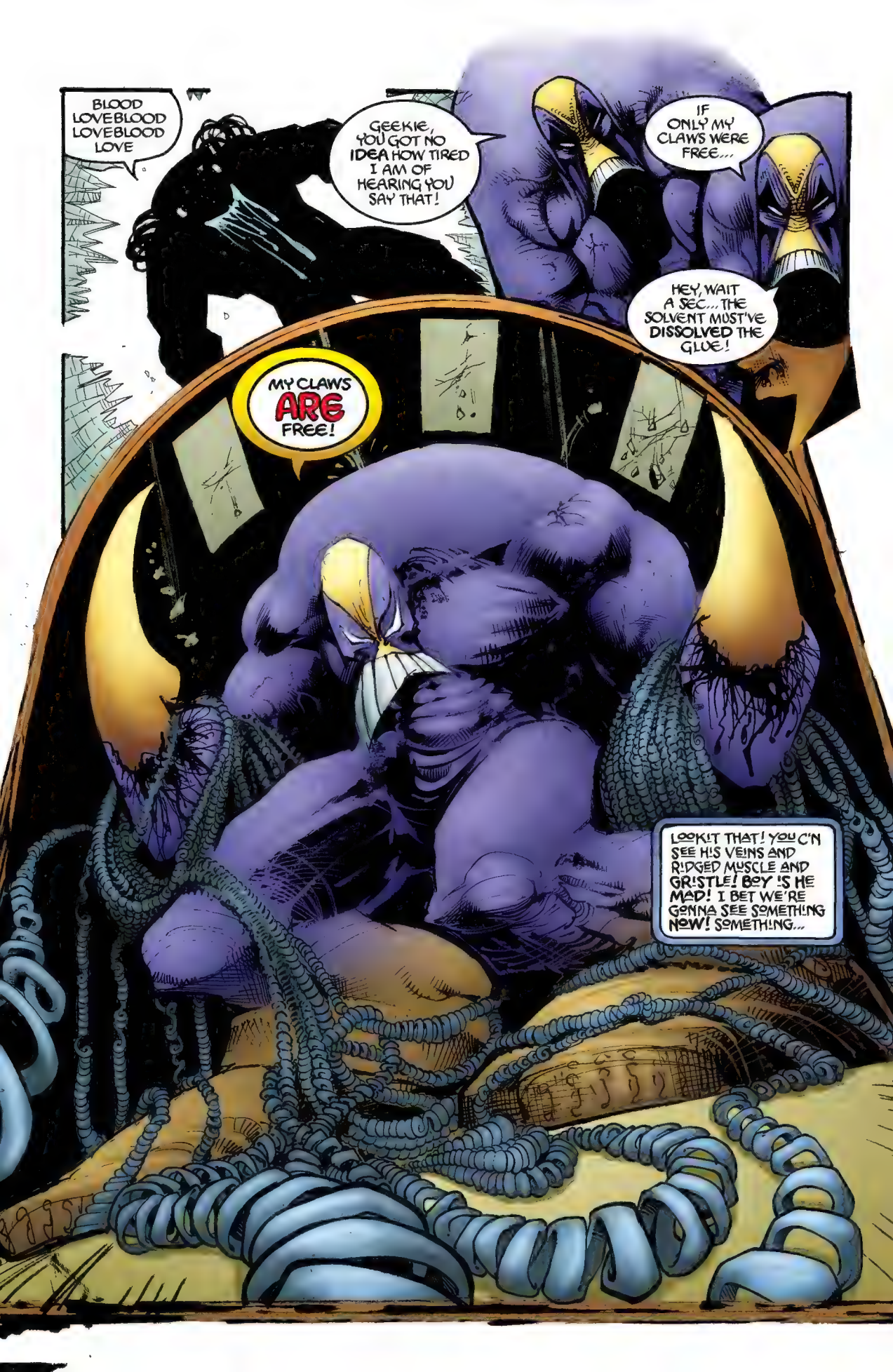
I AM THE JUNGLE QUEEN!
RULER OF THIS WORLD!
SHE HAS DARK HAIR! I THOUGHT SHE WAS A BLOND...?
AN' HOW COME SHE LOOKS LIKE A BAD PAPERBACK COVER?
I DUNNO. THIS IS YOUR DREAM, MAXX!
SO HOW COME YOUR HAIR IS BLACK NOW?
AND IF YOU'RE A LEOPARD QUEEN, WHERE'S YOUR LEOPARD?
I HAVE BEEN CHANGED. CRUELTY AND PAIN HAVE CHANGED ME.
AND MY LEOPARD IS DEAD.

UHHH... I'M BACK.
I WAS LUCKY LAST TIME... IF HE LANDS ON ME THIS TIME I'LL BE CRUSHED!
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GREAT? WHEN THE HERO AND VILLAIN ARE BOTH REALLY MESSED UP, LIKE ALMOST TO DEATH, Y'KNOW?
I REALLY HATE THIII--!
BFD
SEE-111
GUNCH!
BLOOD.
RIPTEAR RENDSUCK KILLBLOOD KILL
BLOOD SMELL CLOSE GOOD GOTTA HAVEIT
RIGHT. LIKE THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN.
BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD!

OKAY, SO MAYBE HE'S NOT A TOTAL LACKEY.
GNUUUHH! BLOOD CRUSH DRINK!
TOOCLOSE! TOOCLOSETOFAIL! KILLCRUSHH SUUCKK!
GREAT! SOUNDS LIKE THE CLOSER HE GETS TO HIS PREY, THE MORE STIMULATED HE IS!
I'M WAY, WAY OUT OF MY LEAGUE HERE!
BOOM

BLOOD SMELL VERY CLOSE EAT TEAR RIEND KILL
I REALLY LIKE IT WHEN TH' HERO IS CORNERED AND TH' VILLAIN IS HAMMERIN' ON HIM. KNOW WHY?
'CAUSE THAT JUSTIFIES ANYTHING TH' HERO DOES T'HIM LATER... NO MATTER HOW GROSS!
I'M A LITTLE FASTER THAN HE IS...GOTTA KEEP AHEAD OF HIM...
JUST cords
I'LL DUCK IN HERE...


GAHH! TELEPHONE CORDS! EVERYWHERE! AND THAT SMELL!
IT'S SOLVENT. WE'RE CLEANING THE CORDS TODAY.
LISTEN! YOU GUYS GOTTA RUN! THERE'S A BIG HONKIN' SHARK-GUY ABOUT THREE HEARTBEATS BEHIND ME AND...
KRR
GAWD, I HATE MY LIFE...!

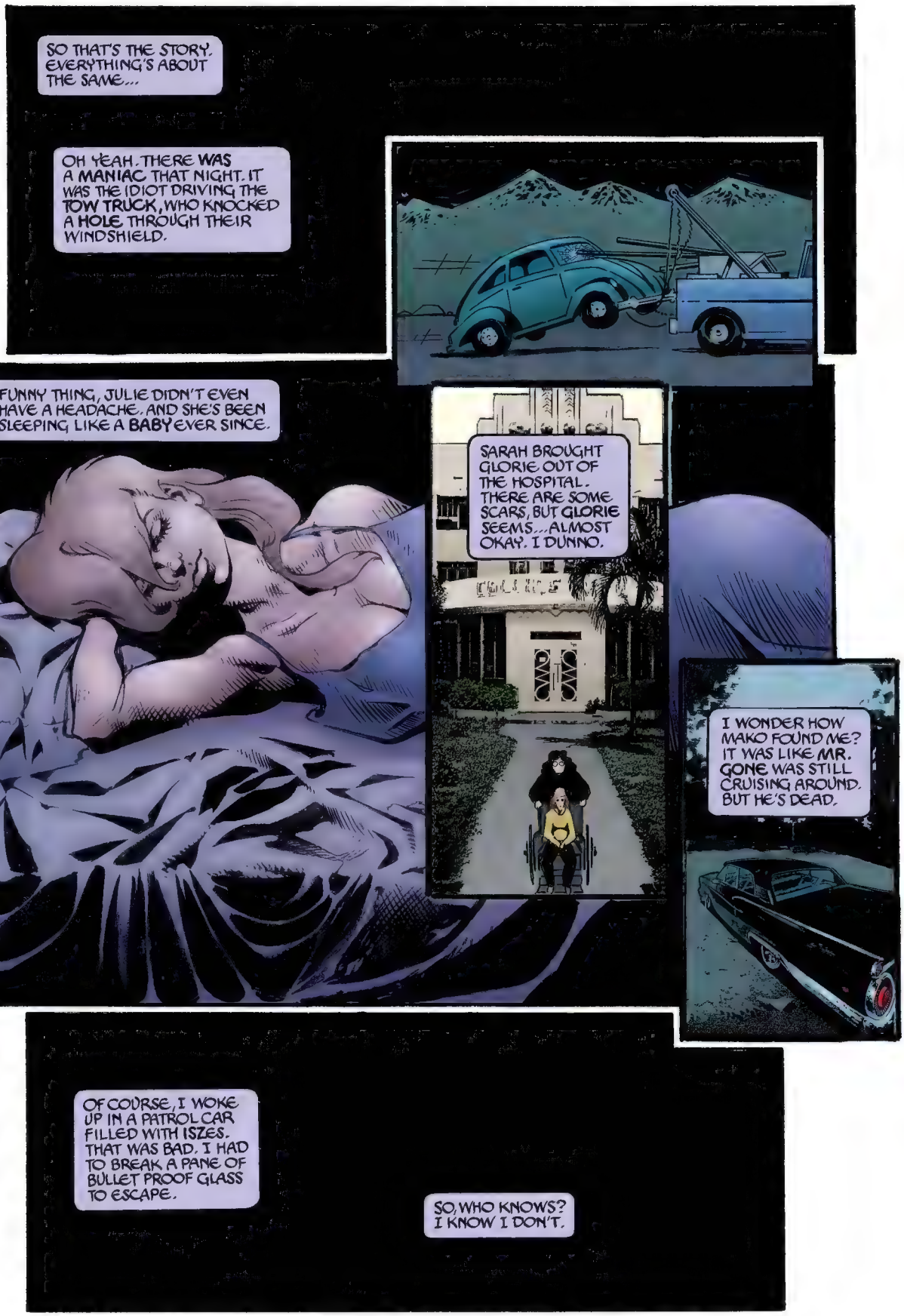

BLOOD LOVEBLOOD LOVEBLOOD LOVE
GEEKIE, YOU GOT NO IDEA HOW TIRED I AM OF HEARING YOU SAY THAT!
IF ONLY MY CLAWS WERE FREE...
HEY, WAIT A SEC... THE SOLVENT MUST'VE DISSOLVED THE GLUE!
MY CLAWS ARE FREE!
LOOK!T THAT! YOU C'N SEE H!S VEINS AND R!DGED MUSCLE AND GR!STLE! BOY 'S HE MAD! I BET WE'RE GONNA SEE SOMETH!NG NOW! SOMETH!NG...

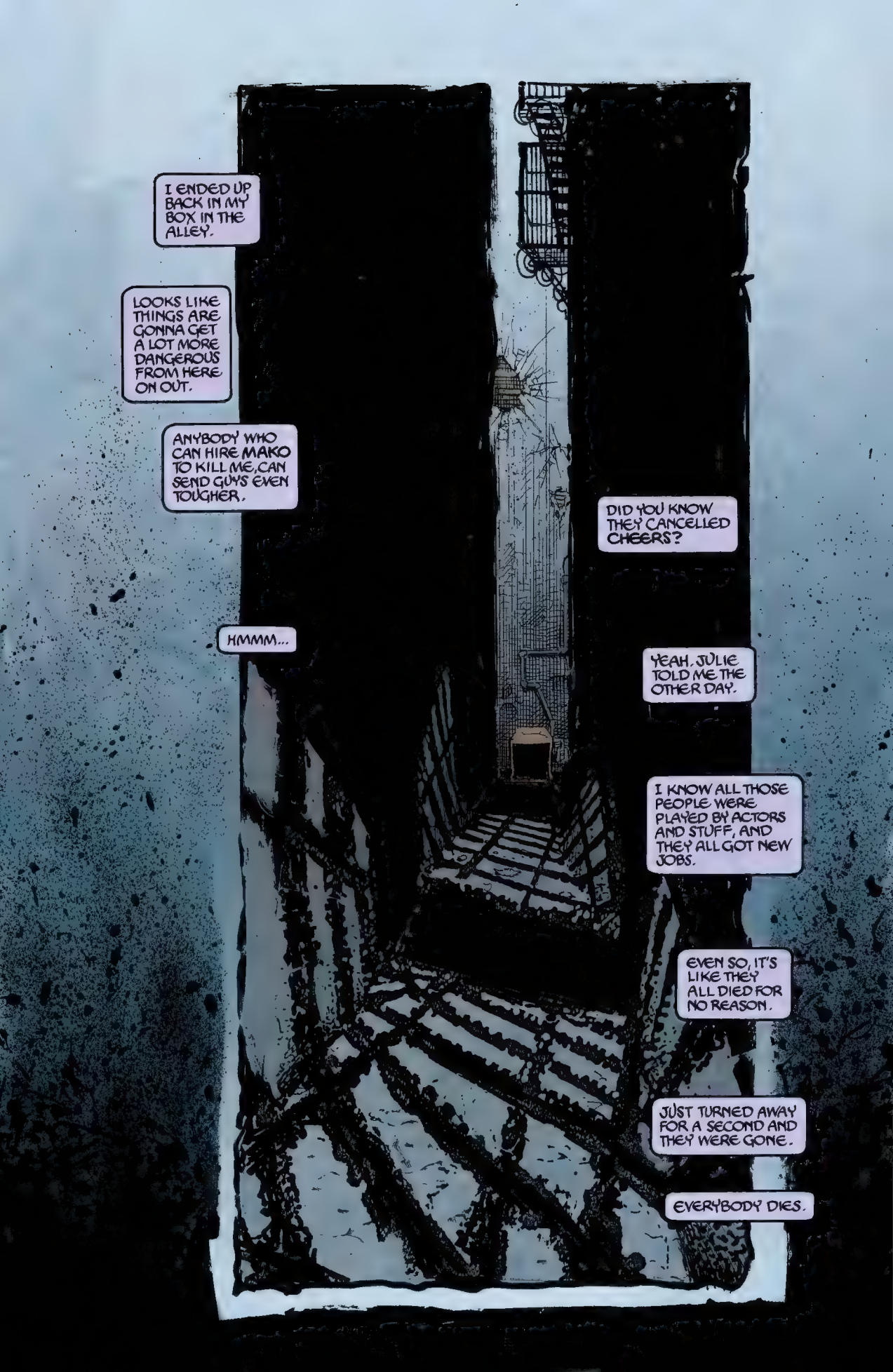
..COOL.
BADOOF!
A RANDOM SPARK MUST HAVE IGNITED THE SOLVENT THEY WERE USING, AND THUS THE GAS LINE...
LOOKY DOOKY, CHIEF :MEEP:
WE FOUND :MEEP: ONE OF THEM!
NAH. THAT'S NOT MAKO. THAT'S JUST SOME POOR DERELICT.

IT'S BEEN HOURS! NOBODY'S COMING.
SURE LOOKS THAT WAY.
MY LIFE'S A JOKE... IT'S ALL OVER NOW.
SUPPOSE THERE'S AN ESCAPED CONVICT OUT THERE! AND HE'S KILLING EVERYONE WHO COMES DOWN THIS ROAD. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REPAIR TRUCK!
HAT'S R BLOOD SUGAR TALKING.
BOY, THE COPS IN THIS TOWN SURE ARE SHORT!
NOW HE'S OUT THERE...
WATCHING US... WITH A LENGTH OF PIPE! GETTING CLOSER... CLOSER...
WAIT, I SEE... TILLY, DUCK!
CRASH!

HI, JULIE. TOOK YOU A WHILE TO FIND YOUR WAY DOWN HERE.
AND YOU ARE...?
LI'L JULIE.. I'M YOUR DEEPEST MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS.. THE WAY YOU SAW YOURSELF WHEN YOU FIRST DEVELOPED SELF-AWARENESS.
Uh-huh. AND MAXX IS DEAD IN THIS HALLUCINATION?
HE CAN'T EXIST HERE. YOU ARE THE ONLY PSYCHIC ENTITY HERE..
AND THESE, OF COURSE.
AWWWOOO BABY LEOPARDS!
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHERE I LEARN THAT FOR EVERY CREATURE THAT DIES, ANOTHER IS BORN.
LAYING IT ON A BIT THICK, AREN'T WE?
MAYBE. THEY'RE YOUR SYMBOLS.
BUT... HOW DID...?
YOU KNOW ABOUT THE LEOPARD?
YES, THAT WAS MAXX'S DREAM! AND HOW...
..IS IT YOU KNOW WHAT MAXX IS DREAMING?
I...KNOW EVERYTHING! THE OUTBACK... THOSE STUPID ISZES...
BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT A PART OF HIS DREAM ..HE'S PART OF YOURS.
JUST AS THE JUNGLE QUEEN IS ALSO A PART OF YOU..
I AM THE PART OF YOU THAT ESCAPES, JULIE.

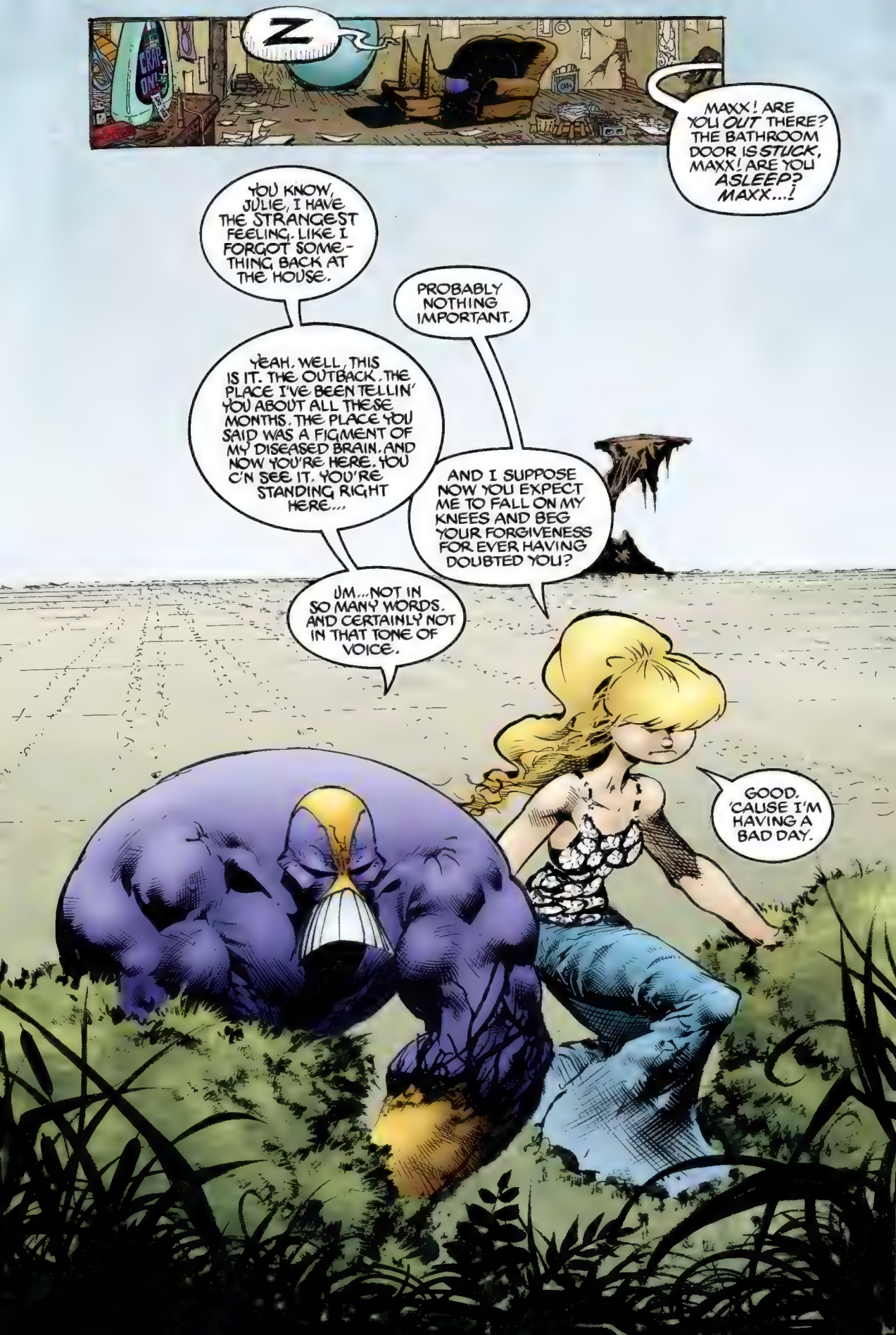
I REFLECT WHAT'S INSIDE, JULIE.
I AM THE IMAGE OF STRENGTH AND INDEPENDENCE YOU FELT BEFORE YOU WERE VIOLATED.
BUT AS I ABSORB MORE TRAUMA, MISERY, AND BITTERNESS, I CHANGE.
I FEAR WHAT I AM BECOMING, JULIE.
BUT NOW THAT YOU HAVE SEEN... ALL THIS... THE WORLD CAN NEVER BE...
...THE SAME...
...SIZE AGAIN.
REFLECTING? SO SHE'S MY SUBCONSCIOUS? WHY IS MAXX DREAMING HER?
YOU THINK TOO MUCH. LET'S PLAY.
SO SHE'S MY ID AND YOU'RE MY SUPEREGO? SO WHAT'S MAXX? MY ANIMUS?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. THIS AIN'T PSYCH 101. YOU NEED A SPIRIT-ANIMAL TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH IT ALL.
SPIRIT-ANIMAL, huh? LIKE A CHIPMUNK? HOW DO I FIND ONE?
YOU ALREADY HAVE.
JUST KEEP COMING BACK HERE TO PLAY WITH ME..
..AND HELP ME..
..GROW UP.
I DON'T SUPPOSE I'LL REMEMBER ANY OF THIS WHEN I WAKE UP?
OH, NO. THIS STUFF IS BURIED SO DEEPLY, IT'LL TAKE YOU YEARS TO WORK THROUGH!

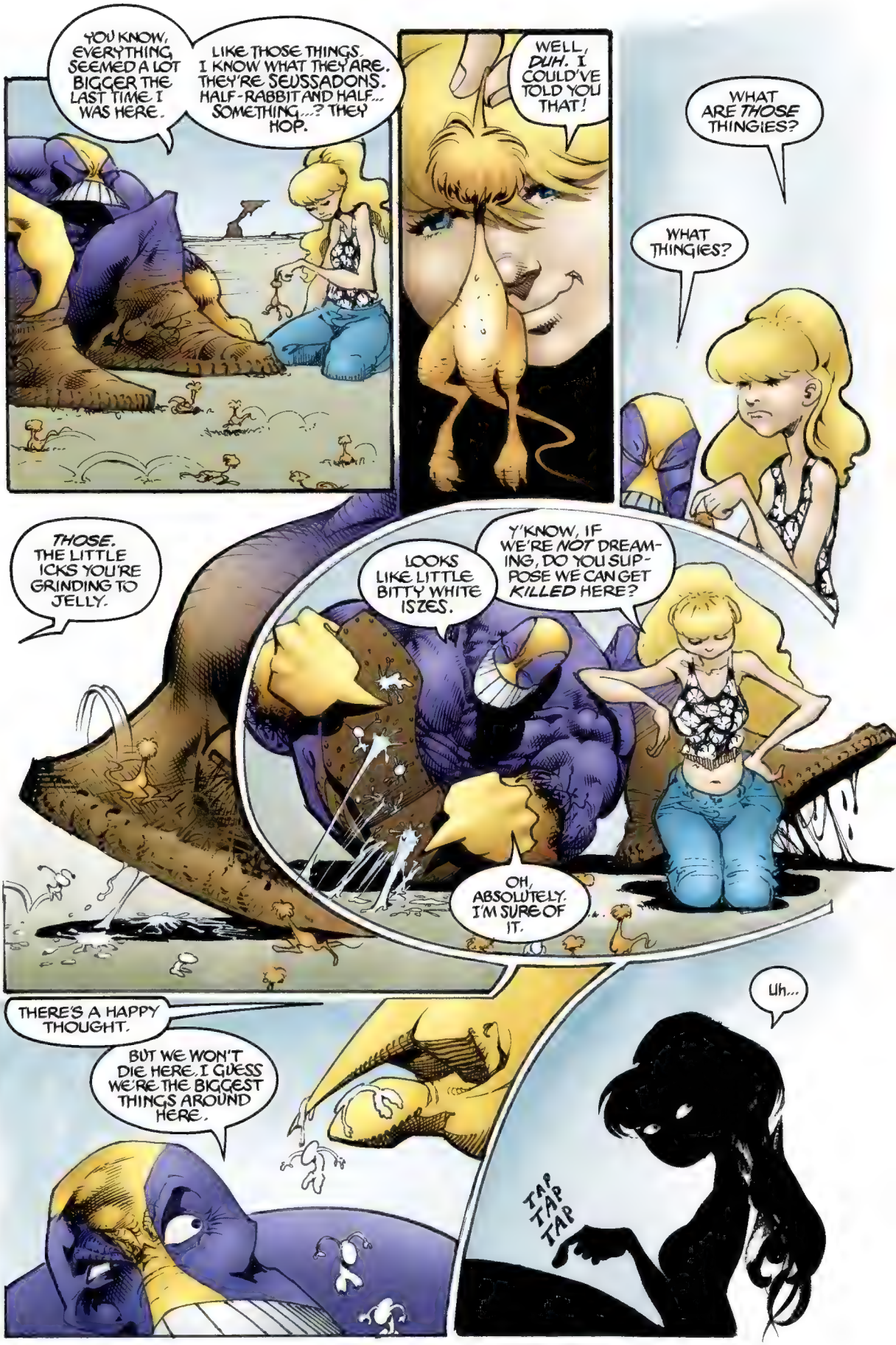

SO THAT'S THE STORY. EVERYTHING'S ABOUT THE SAME...
OH YEAH. THERE WAS A MANIAC THAT NIGHT. IT WAS THE IDIOT DRIVING THE TOW TRUCK, WHO KNOCKED A HOLE THROUGH THEIR WINDSHIELD.
FUNNY THING, JULIE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A HEADACHE, AND SHE'S BEEN SLEEPING LIKE A BABY EVER SINCE.
SARAH BROUGHT GLORIE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. THERE ARE SOME SCARS, BUT GLORIE SEEMS...ALMOST OKAY. I DUNNO.
I WONDER HOW MAKO FOUND ME? IT WAS LIKE MR. GONE WAS STILL CRUISING AROUND, BUT HE'S DEAD.
OF COURSE, I WOKE UP IN A PATROL CAR FILLED WITH ISZES. THAT WAS BAD. I HAD TO BREAK A PANE OF BULLET PROOF GLASS TO ESCAPE.
SO, WHO KNOWS? I KNOW I DON'T.


I ENDED UP BACK IN MY BOX IN THE ALLEY.
LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE GONNA GET A LOT MORE DANGEROUS FROM HERE ON OUT.
ANYBODY WHO CAN HIRE MAKO TO KILL ME, CAN SEND GUYS EVEN TOUGHER.
HMMM...
DID YOU KNOW THEY CANCELLED CHEERS?
YEAH. JULIE TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY.
I KNOW ALL THOSE PEOPLE WERE PLAYED BY ACTORS AND STUFF, AND THEY ALL GOT NEW JOBS.
EVEN SO, IT'S LIKE THEY ALL DIED FOR NO REASON.
JUST TURNED AWAY FOR A SECOND AND THEY WERE GONE.
EVERYBODY DIES.

Chapter Three

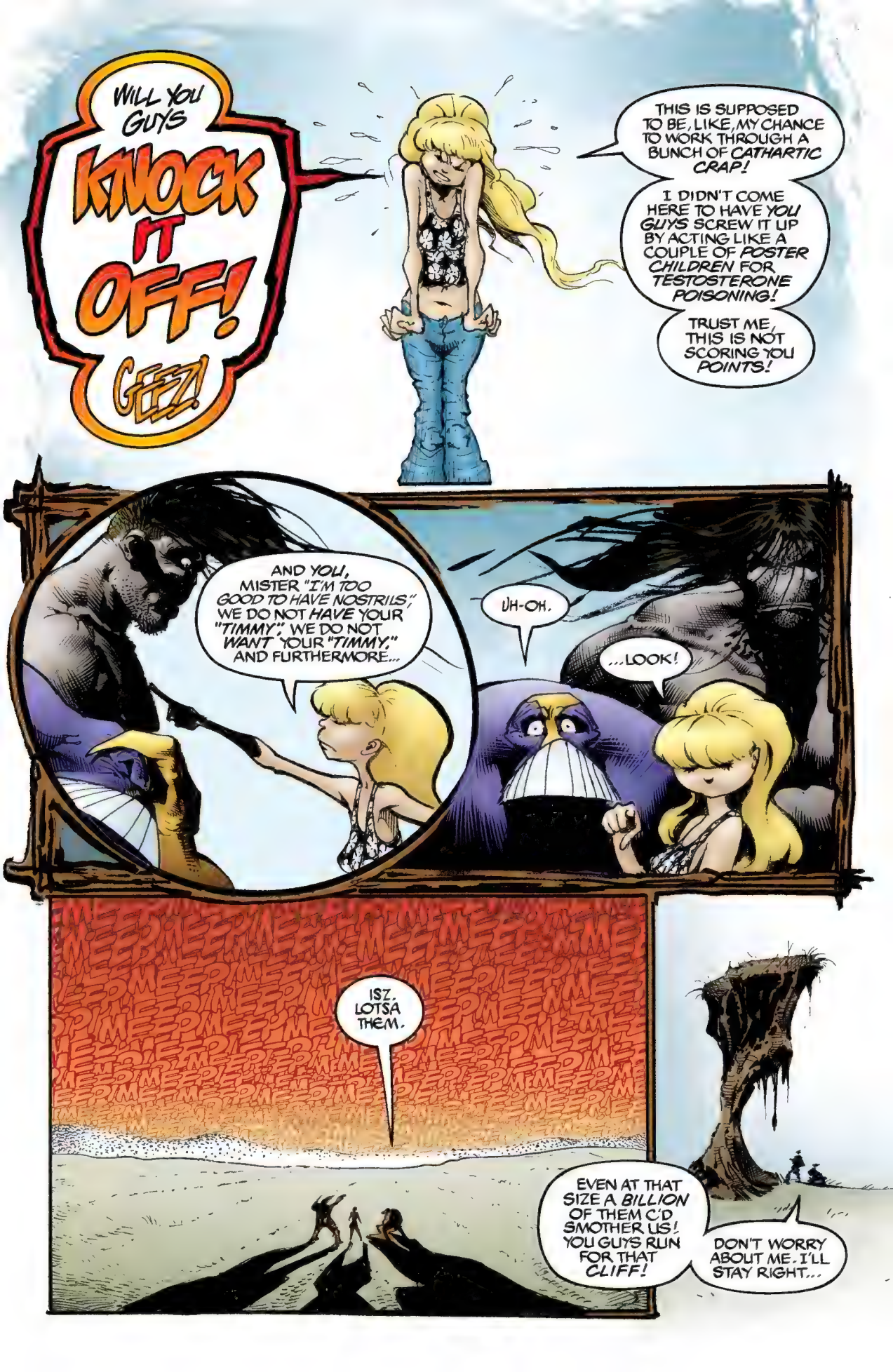
MEDICAL EXAMINER'S LAB.
DO YOU ♪ FEEL LIKE WE DO...OOOH... ♫
'CORDIN' TO THE POLICE, THIS GOOD OL' BOY'S STREET NAME WAS TEEGO...
THEY FOUND 'IM IN A BOX IN SOME ALLEY... PROB'LY EXPLAINS WHY 'IS CLOTHES SMELL SO BAD!
THESE DEAD FELLAS IS SUPPOSED T'BE PEELED WHEN I GET 'EM!
S'FUNNY... ALMOST SEEMS LIKE 'IS BODY'S CHANGIN' SHAPE TH' CLOSER I GET T' TH' SKIN--
--WHAT TH'--!
THAT--THAT AIN'T RIGHT! THAT AIN'T WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE WHEN HE WAS BRUNG IN!
IT'S--
--IT'S--
--UNNATURAL!
Eh?
CREEEEEAK
MEEP!

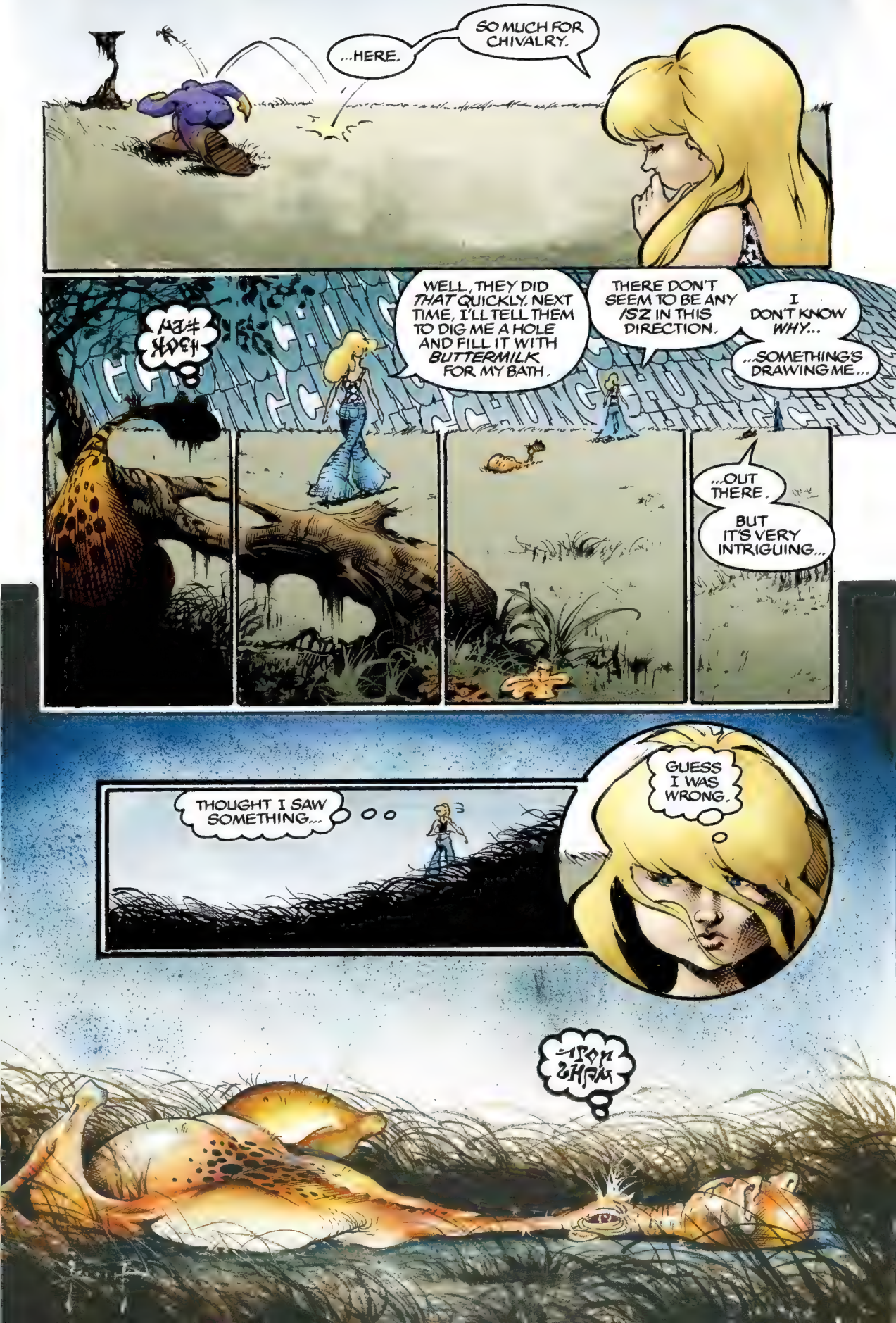

Z
MAXX! ARE YOU OUT THERE? THE BATHROOM DOOR IS STUCK, MAXX! ARE YOU ASLEEP? MAXX...!
YOU KNOW, JULIE, I HAVE THE STRANGEST FEELING. LIKE I FORGOT SOMETHING BACK AT THE HOUSE.
PROBABLY NOTHING IMPORTANT.
YEAH. WELL, THIS IS IT. THE OUTBACK. THE PLACE I'VE BEEN TELLIN' YOU ABOUT ALL THESE MONTHS. THE PLACE YOU SAID WAS A FIGMENT OF MY DISEASED BRAIN. AND NOW YOU'RE HERE. YOU C'N SEE IT. YOU'RE STANDING RIGHT HERE...
AND I SUPPOSE NOW YOU EXPECT ME TO FALL ON MY KNEES AND BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR EVER HAVING DOUBTED YOU?
UM...NOT IN SO MANY WORDS. AND CERTAINLY NOT IN THAT TONE OF VOICE.
GOOD. 'CAUSE I'M HAVING A BAD DAY.


YOU KNOW, EVERYTHING SEEMED A LOT BIGGER THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE.
LIKE THOSE THINGS. I KNOW WHAT THEY ARE. THEY'RE SEUSSADONS. HALF-RABBIT AND HALF... SOMETHING...? THEY HOP.
WELL, DUH. I COULD'VE TOLD YOU THAT!
WHAT ARE THOSE THINGIES?
WHAT THINGIES?
THOSE. THE LITTLE ICKS YOU'RE GRINDING TO JELLY.
LOOKS LIKE LITTLE BITTY WHITE ISZES.
Y'KNOW, IF WE'RE NOT DREAMING, DO YOU SUPPOSE WE CAN GET KILLED HERE?
OH, ABSOLUTELY. I'M SURE OF IT.
THERE'S A HAPPY THOUGHT.
BUT WE WON'T DIE HERE. I GUESS WE'RE THE BIGGEST THINGS AROUND HERE.
Uh...
TAP TAP TAP

GUESS AGAIN.

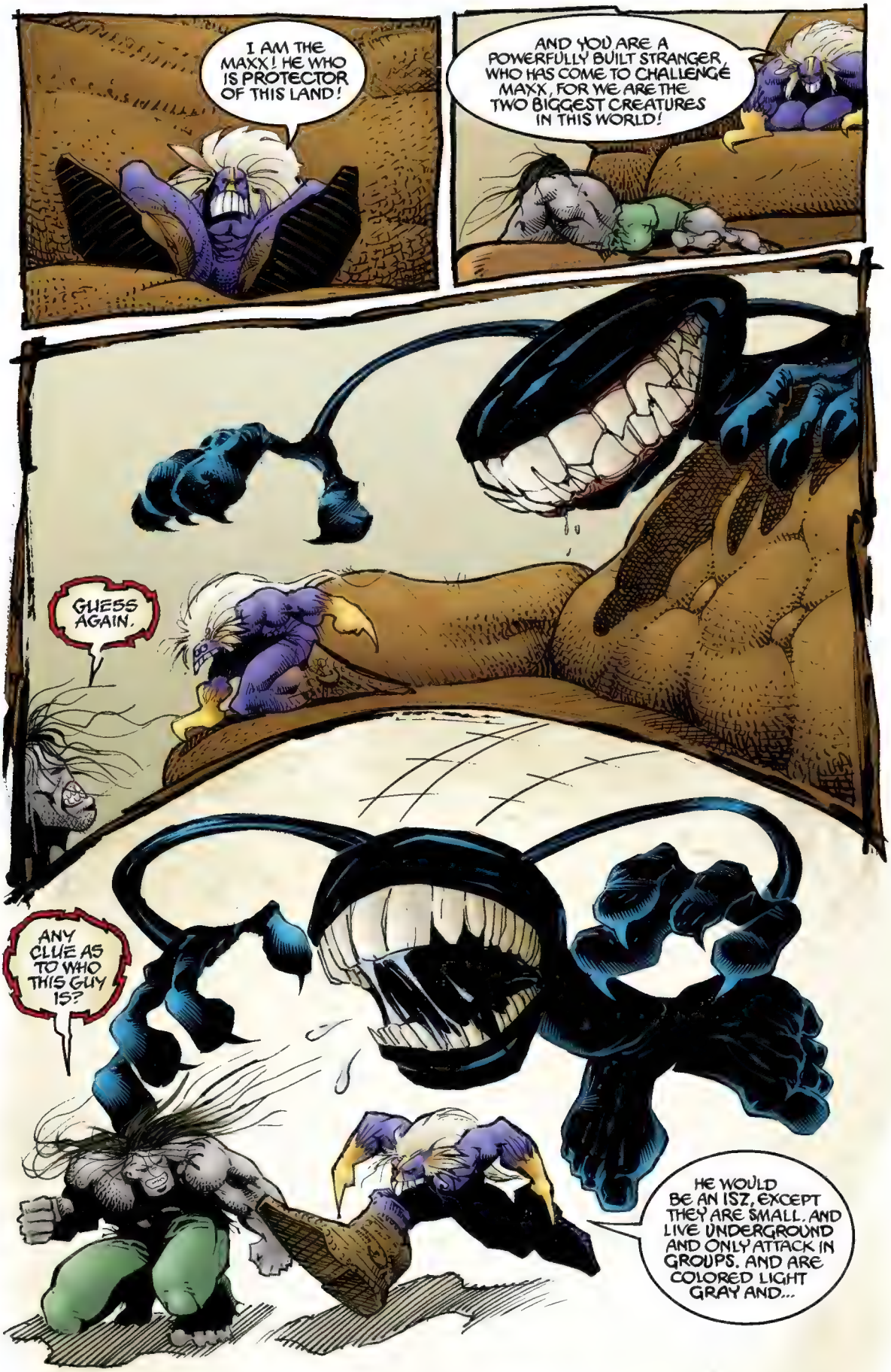
TIMMY! WHERE'S TIMMY?
HE WAS MY ONLY FRIEND AND NOW HE'S GONE! AND YOU KNOW SOMETHING! YOU TOOK HIM!
GIVE HIM BACK!
HEY!
WELL, JULIE'S MY ONLY FRIEND! AND IF YOU HURT HER I'LL...


WILL YOU GUYS
KNOCK IT OFF!
GEEZ!
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE, LIKE, MY CHANCE TO WORK THROUGH A BUNCH OF CATHARTIC CRAP!
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO HAVE YOU GUYS SCREW IT UP BY ACTING LIKE A COUPLE OF POSTER CHILDREN FOR TESTOSTERONE POISONING!
TRUST ME, THIS IS NOT SCORING YOU POINTS!
AND YOU, MISTER "I'M TOO GOOD TO HAVE NOSTRILS," WE DO NOT HAVE YOUR "TIMMY", WE DO NOT WANT YOUR "TIMMY." AND FURTHERMORE...
UH-OH.
...LOOK!
MEEP
ISZ. LOTSA THEM.
EVEN AT THAT SIZE A BILLION OF THEM C'D SMOTHER US! YOU GUYS RUN FOR THAT CLIFF!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL STAY RIGHT...


SO MUCH FOR CHIVALRY.
...HERE.
WELL, THEY DID THAT QUICKLY. NEXT TIME, I'LL TELL THEM TO DIG ME A HOLE AND FILL IT WITH BUTTERMILK FOR MY BATH.
THERE DON'T SEEM TO BE ANY /SZ IN THIS DIRECTION.
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...SOMETHING'S DRAWING ME...
...OUT THERE.
BUT IT'S VERY INTRIGUING...
THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING...
GUESS I WAS WRONG.

THE ELMER A. CRAFT HIGH SCHOOL ART DEPARTMENT.
I HATE INVENTORY. I HATE MRS. BRUSSLES.
ONE STUPID BOX... TWO STUPID BOXES... THREE...
LIFE SUCKS, HUH?
DOWN HERE, KIDDO.
HI, SARAH. I'M A MAGIC PIECE OF TALKING CLAY.
RIGHT.
NO, REALLY.
I CAN HELP YOU IF YOU SNEAK ME INTO JULIE WINTERS' HOUSE.
YOU KNOW ABOUT JULIE?
YOU MUST GET AROUND FOR A PIECE OF CLAY.
WELL, YEAH...FOR A PIECE OF CLAY.
WHY SHOULD I BETRAY JULIE FOR YOU?
"I THINK IT'S PRETTY IMPORTANT FOR A WRITER TO KNOW JUST HOW ROTTEN SHE CAN BE...".
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!
CLAY
YOU'LL BE BACK...AND WE CAN TALK AND PLAY GAMES, I DON'T KNOW...

AND ON THE STAIRWELL LEADING TO JULIE WINTERS' APARTMENT...
TIMMY.
TIMMY... WAIT.
TIMMY... WHERE DID YOU GO...?
YOU! WHAT DID YOU DO WITH...?
CRAP-ON!
SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING CHANGES!


I AM THE MAXX! HE WHO IS PROTECTOR OF THIS LAND!
AND YOU ARE A POWERFULLY BUILT STRANGER WHO HAS COME TO CHALLENGE MAXX, FOR WE ARE THE TWO BIGGEST CREATURES IN THIS WORLD!
GUESS AGAIN.
ANY CLUE AS TO WHO THIS GUY IS?
HE WOULD BE AN ISZ, EXCEPT THEY ARE SMALL, AND LIVE UNDERGROUND AND ONLY ATTACK IN GROUPS. AND ARE COLORED LIGHT GRAY AND...

RUN! DON'T TALK!
YES, MAXX WILL RUN. MAXX WILL LOSE THIS GIANT ISZ IN THE GRASSLANDS OF HIS BELOVED PANGAEA!
MAXX WILL RACE ACROSS THESE CLIFFS AND PLATEAUS, LEAPING LIKE A POWERFUL GOATFROG!
STAY! MAXX WILL LEAD THE MONSTER AWAY WITH HIS WILDERNESS CUNNING!
BOP!
RIGHT. LIKE THAT'S REALLY GONNA HAPPEN!
I KNOW YOU'RE STILL OUT THERE, MAXX. I CAN HEAR YOU MOVING AROUND.
YOU BETTER BE OUT THERE, MAXX.

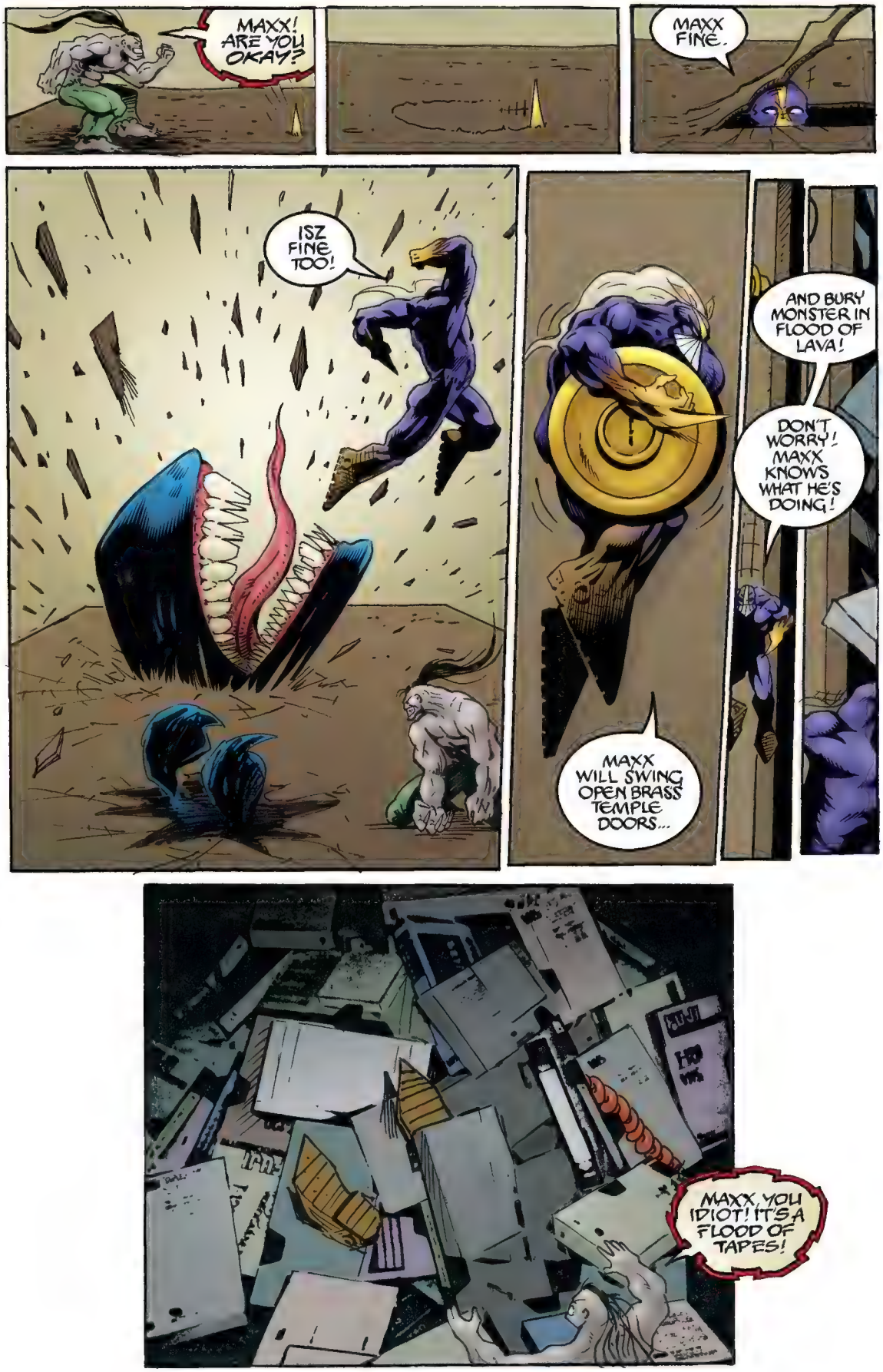
SO. DO YOU BRING ALL YOUR DATES TO THIS ABANDONED OVER-PASS, SARAH?
HEH. HEH...
JUST KIDDING.
LOOK, JUST BECAUSE I BROUGHT YOU OUT HERE DOESN'T MEAN I'M GONNA BETRAY HER.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I WANT TO HURT HER? MAYBE I JUST WANT TO BE HER FRIEND.
YEAH, RIGHT.
I CAN SEE HIM NOW...PASSING LIKE FIRE THROUGH THE MAGNETIC WALL THAT YOU'VE BUILT AROUND YOUR SOUL.
YOURS MIGHT BE A HORSE. A HUGE, SPIRITED ARABIAN!
AND EVERYBODY HAS A SPIRIT FRIEND WHO HELPS THEM OVER THE ROUGH SPOTS.
AN ANIMAL, USUALLY.
IT'S BUILT OF ALL THE MEAN, NASTY, NEGATIVE THINGS PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT YOU. THEY'RE JUST IDEAS...WORDS...YOU HEAR THEM LONG ENOUGH, AND EVENTUALLY YOU BUY IT.

WELL, I KNEW THAT WOULDN'T FLY.
OKAY, LET'S CUT THE CRAP, SARAH. YOU GET ME IN THAT HOUSE AND I CAN GET YOU--
SHUT UP! STOP SCREWING WITH MY HEAD!
I KNOW THINGS, SARAH. I KNOW ABOUT THE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE OF PEOPLE. I KNOW ABOUT THE SECRET FAULT LINES OF THEIR SOULS.
SEE, SARAH, EVERYBODY SNAPS.
LOOK AT YOU. . .TALKING TO A PIECE OF CLAY.
BUT SUPPOSE YOU KNOW HOW TO FIND YOUR ANIMAL, THEN IT WILL TEACH YOU HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH LIFE, HOW TO
TEAR
DOWN
THAT
WALL!
FAT
FOOL
I CAN LEAD YOU RIGHT TO THAT HORSE, SARAH.
SO, WHEN DO WE GO TO JULIE'S?

MAXX! STOP HIDING AND RUN!
MAXX DOES NOT HIDE! MAXX IS RESTING BENEATH THE DECAYING BODY OF THIS SMALL AIRWHALE!
SLAP!
NOW, MAXX RUNS!
GOOD PLAN.
MAXX WILL SEIZE THE SPLIT TAIL OF THIS SLEEPING SCORPION AND...
SWING FOR FREEDOM! EVERY SINEW BURSTING...
HE EXPERTLY JUDGES THE DISTANCE TO THE TREES AND GRABBING A BRANCH...
SPLASH

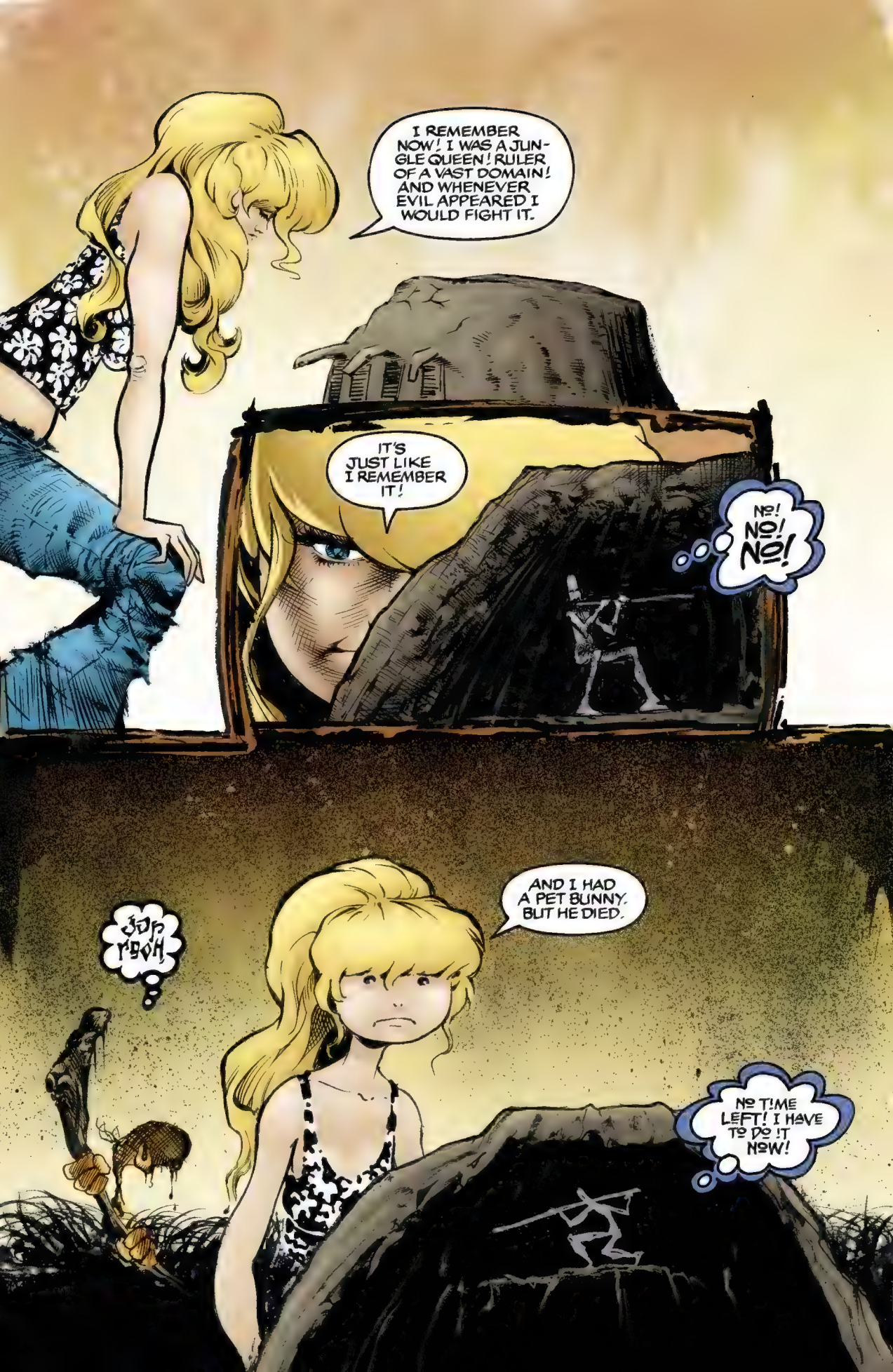
HOW REFRESHING! THE BUBBLING WATERS OF THE MALIJOO... THE SPRING OF LIFE... HAVE REVIVED ME.
NOW IT IS TIME TO END THIS, WITH THE FLASHING BLADE DJARNBAR, WHICH I DRAW FROM THIS STONE!
BACK, MONSTER! MAXX WOULD NOT SLAY YOU, BUT WOULD RATHER BE YOUR TINY FRIEND!
NO MATTER THE PROVOCATION I WILL NOT... OH, HELL!
EAT STEEL!
BAD ISZ!
HE PUSHED MAXX TOO FAR!
WILL YOU RUN?
Y'KNOW, MAXX, IT'S BEEN REAL INTERESTING MEETING YOU.

I DON'T USUALLY GET TO BE THE SMARTEST GUY IN THE ROOM!
NOW WATCH CLOSELY.
I'M ABOUT TO MAKE ALL OUR PROBLEMS DISAPPEAR!
STEPHEN KING
SALEM'S LOT
CRASH!


MAXX! ARE YOU OKAY?
MAXX FINE.
ISZ FINE TOO!
AND BURY MONSTER IN FLOOD OF LAVA!
DON'T WORRY! MAXX KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
MAXX WILL SWING OPEN BRASS TEMPLE DOORS...
MAXX YOU IDIOT! IT'S A FLOOD OF TAPES!

UHH. I GUESS SHE'S NOT HOME.
YOU'RE SURE YOU GOT THE RIGHT PLACE?
OUCH! CAREFUL, SARAH. I'M A SENSITIVE PIECE OF CLAY!
WILL YOU SHUT UP?! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I'M DOING THIS!
MY WORLD SUCKS, BUT AT LEAST IT'S KIND OF NORMAL...
AND ONCE I GET RID OF YOU, IT'LL BE...
...SANE...
SARAH.
SARAH?
YOU STOPPED TALKING, SARAH. I CAN'T HEAR YOU.
I AM INSIDE, RIGHT?
YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED A JOKE ON OL' MR. CLAY, HAVE YOU?
CLICK
YOU BETTER NOT'VE!
SARAH!

WHAT A FUNNY LITTLE HOUSE! JUST LIKE THE ONE I MADE OUT OF CLAY AND POPSICLE STICKS WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL!
SHE'S STARTING TO REMEMBER! NOT NOW! IT'S TOO SOON!
IF WE ALL RETURN TO "NORMAL," I'LL PROBABLY END UP WITHOUT A HEAD!
BUT IF I NAIL THAT THING WITH A POISON DART...
...IT'LL BUY ME SOME TIME.

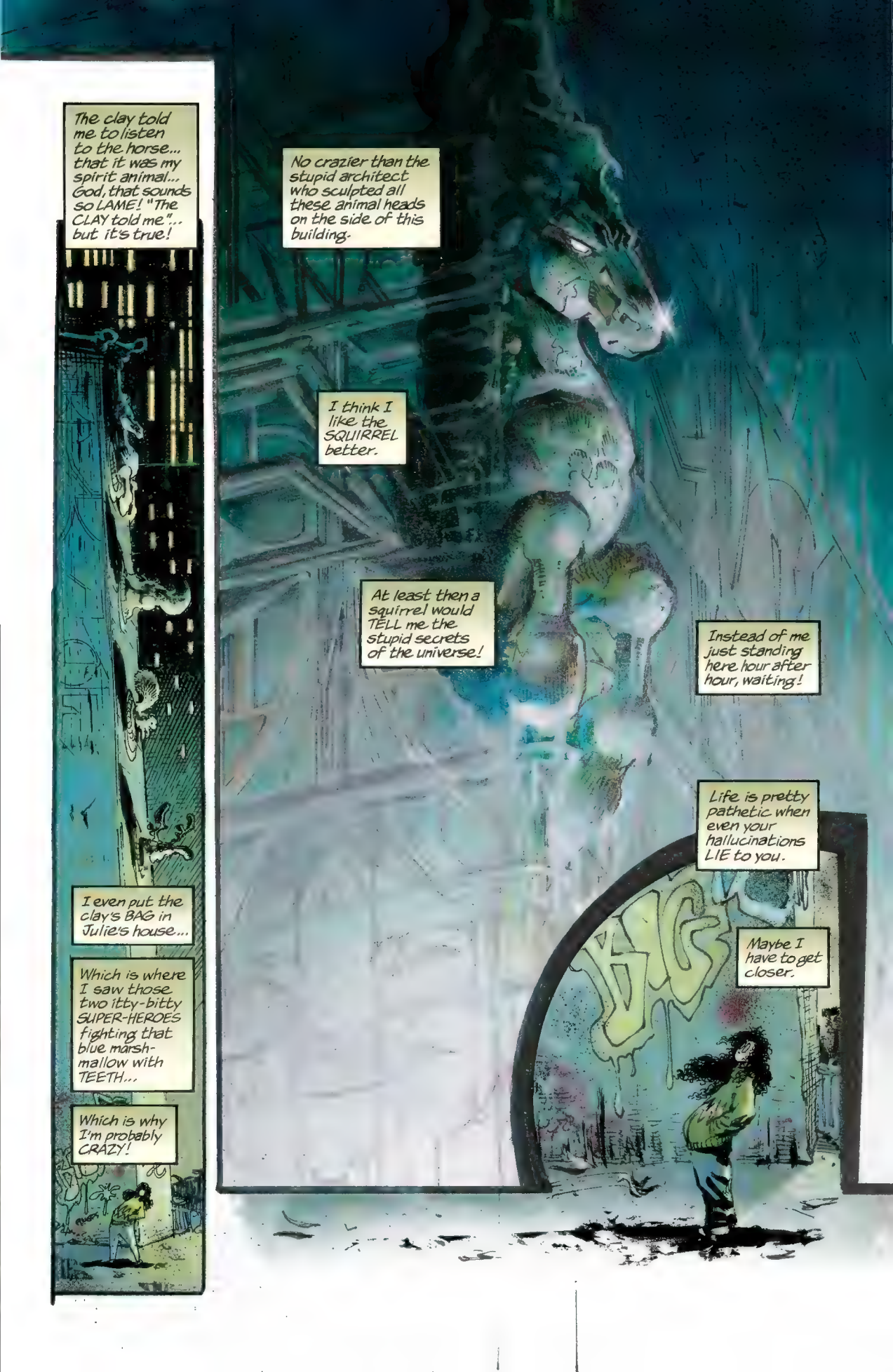

I REMEMBER NOW! I WAS A JUNGLE QUEEN! RULER OF A VAST DOMAIN! AND WHENEVER EVIL APPEARED I WOULD FIGHT IT.
IT'S JUST LIKE I REMEMBER IT!
NO! NO! NO!
AND I HAD A PET BUNNY. BUT HE DIED.
NO TIME LEFT! I HAVE TO DO IT NOW!

SUDDENLY...

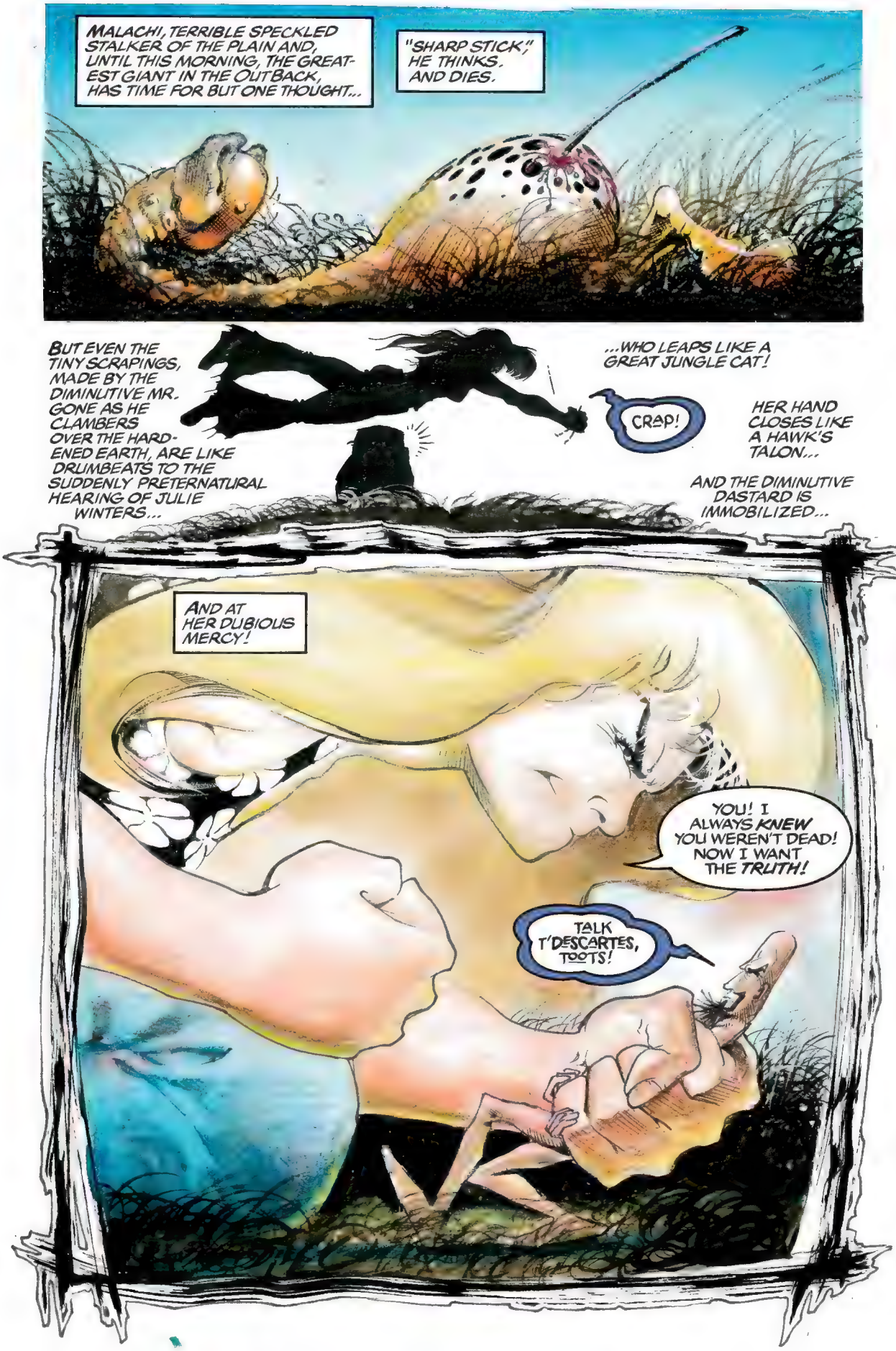
AND ELSEWHERE...
PITT! PULL ME UP. PITT!
THERE ARE A LOT OF ISZES DOWN THERE, PITT. DON'T JUST STARE AT THEM! PULL ME UP!
TIMMY, THEY ARE ALL... TIMMY...
BUT... WHERE ARE TIMMY'S...
...EYES?
WHAT? SNAP OUT OF IT, PITT!

GRAB MY HAND! PULL ME UP! DON'T JUST STAND THERE SAYING "TIMMY"!
KILL!
TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE!
THE BURNING, BARBED RING OF MEMORY!

Four
This eye is too HIGH.
This One Too LOW.
JAW IS UN-even.
Imperfections of a JUNGLE Queen


The clay told me to listen to the horse... that it was my spirit animal... God, that sounds so LAME! "The CLAY told me"... but it's true!
No crazier than the stupid architect who sculpted all these animal heads on the side of this building.
I think I like the SQUIRREL better.
At least then a squirrel would TELL me the stupid secrets of the universe!
Instead of me just standing here hour after hour, waiting!
Life is pretty pathetic when even your hallucinations LIE to you.
Maybe I have to get closer.
I even put the clay's BAG in Julie's house...
Which is where I saw those two itty-bitty SUPER-HEROES fighting that blue marsh-mallow with TEETH...
Which is why I'm probably CRAZY!

AND ELSEWHERE, DEEP WITHIN THAT SAVAGE LAND KNOWN AS THE OUTBACK...
JULIE WINTERS HEARS THE SUBTLE RUSTLE OF GRASSES...FEELS LEOPARD SKIN AGAINST HER FLESH... AND INSTINCTS SHE NEVER REALIZED SHE HAD KICK ON!
WITH STEEL-SPRING SPEED AND STRENGTH SHE TWISTS, RIPPING FREE ONE OF THE SUPPORT POLES FROM THE MASSIVE STONE FERTILITY SYMBOL...
AND HURLING IT LIKE A SPEAR INTO THE VITALS OF THE APPROACHING PREDATOR!
FSSSSS
AAAH!
CHUK
THE CRAZED SPECKLED STALKER REGAINS ITS FEET, PANTING WITH SHOCK...
...AND CRASHES INTO THE MINIATURE JUNGLE SURROUNDING THEM WITH A DAMP SCREAM.
"WELL, COOL," THINKS JULIE, HER MIND ABLAZE WITH PRIMITIVE PASSIONS.
YIKES! THAT LITTLE CREAM-FILLED BLINTZ IS GOING NATIVE! I BETTER BOOK!

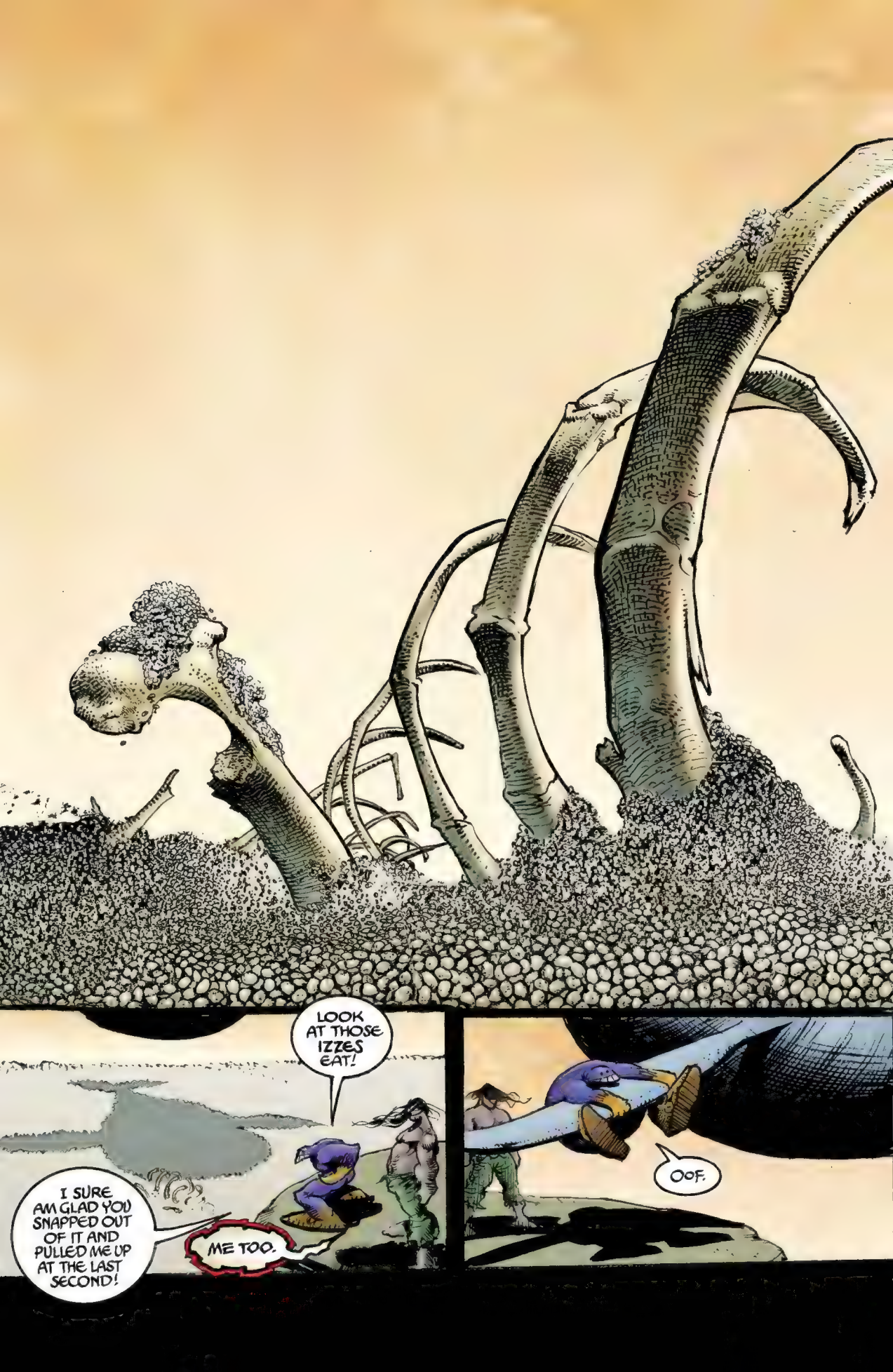

MALACHI, TERRIBLE SPECKLED STALKER OF THE PLAIN AND, UNTIL THIS MORNING, THE GREATEST GIANT IN THE OUTBACK, HAS TIME FOR BUT ONE THOUGHT...
"SHARP STICK," HE THINKS. AND DIES.
BUT EVEN THE TINY SCRAPINGS, MADE BY THE DIMINUTIVE MR. GONE AS HE CLAMBERS OVER THE HARDENED EARTH, ARE LIKE DRUMBEATS TO THE SUDDENLY PRETERNATURAL HEARING OF JULIE WINTERS...
...WHO LEAPS LIKE A GREAT JUNGLE CAT!
CRAP!
HER HAND CLOSES LIKE A HAWK'S TALON...
AND THE DIMINUTIVE DASTARD IS IMMOBILIZED...
AND AT HER DUBIOUS MERCY!
YOU! I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WEREN'T DEAD! NOW I WANT THE TRUTH!
TALK T'DESCARTES, TOOTS!

AND YET ELSEWHERE, IN THE SUDDENLY HUGE APARTMENT OF JULIE WINTERS...
MAXX IS TRIUMPHANT OVER THE RAVENOUS PIRANOSAURUS! HE IS TRULY LORD OF THE JUNGLE! AS IS HIS BROTHER, PITT!
GIVE IT A REST, MAXX. THERE'S SOMETHING NUTS HERE, AND I MEAN T'SCOPE IT OUT!

BUT FIRST WE MUST RID OURSELVES OF THIS DAEMONIC BEAST! AND MAXX HAS A PLAN!
BIG GULP
OH, GOD.
NO, THIS BE GOOD PLAN.
UHHHHH
MAXX, WHY IS IT I GOTTA BE OUT HERE, SUPPLYING... UHH... ALL TH' MUSCLE?

WHILE YOU SIT BACK THERE?
UH, MAXX...? I THINK THE DINGUS IS WRIGGLIN' FREE!
MAXX IS STEADYING.
YEAH, RIGHT.
BROTHER PITT NOT WORRY! MAXX IS COMING!
NO, MAXX... WHATEVER YOU DO...FOR GOD'S SAKE...
DON'T LET...
GO
OOPS!

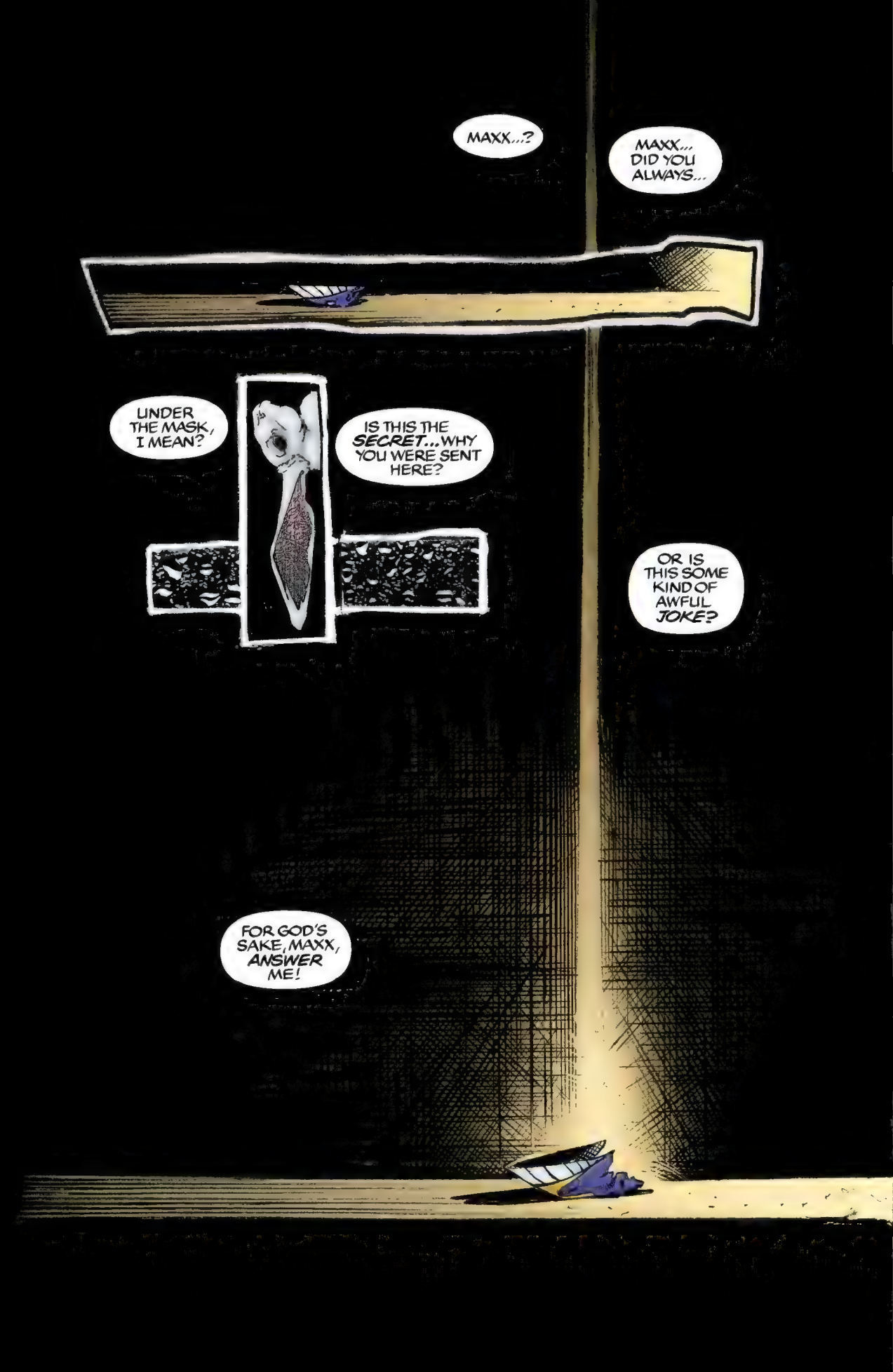
BROTHER PITT LOOKED MAD AS HE SAIL AWAY.
WHO'S OUT THERE? I CAN HEAR SOMEONE...
MAXX?
ARE YOU OUT THERE, MAXX? I'M STILL LOCKED IN THIS BATHROOM.
YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE ME, MAXX!
I AM COMING, JULIE!
MAXX... YOUR MASK...
...IT'S FALLEN...
YOU'RE...
...YOU'RE A...
OH GOD

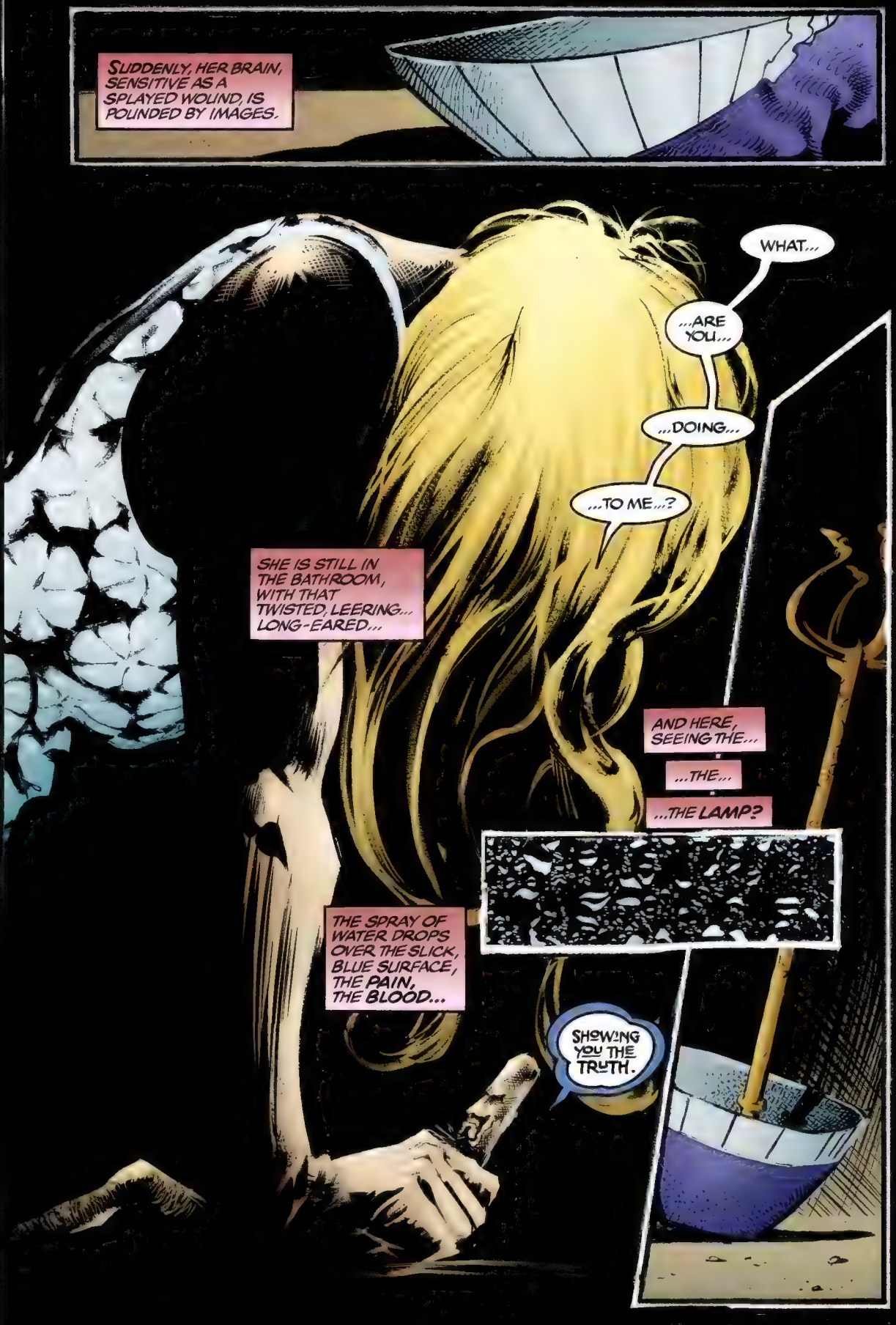

LOOK AT THOSE IZZES EAT!
I SURE AM GLAD YOU SNAPPED OUT OF IT AND PULLED ME UP AT THE LAST SECOND!
ME TOO.
OOF.

WOW!
HEY! THAT'S PRETTY GOOD!
WHEN YOU GET HELP, YOU CAN COME BACK FOR ME.
RIGHT, MAXX?
MAXX?
GODDAM YOU, MAXX!

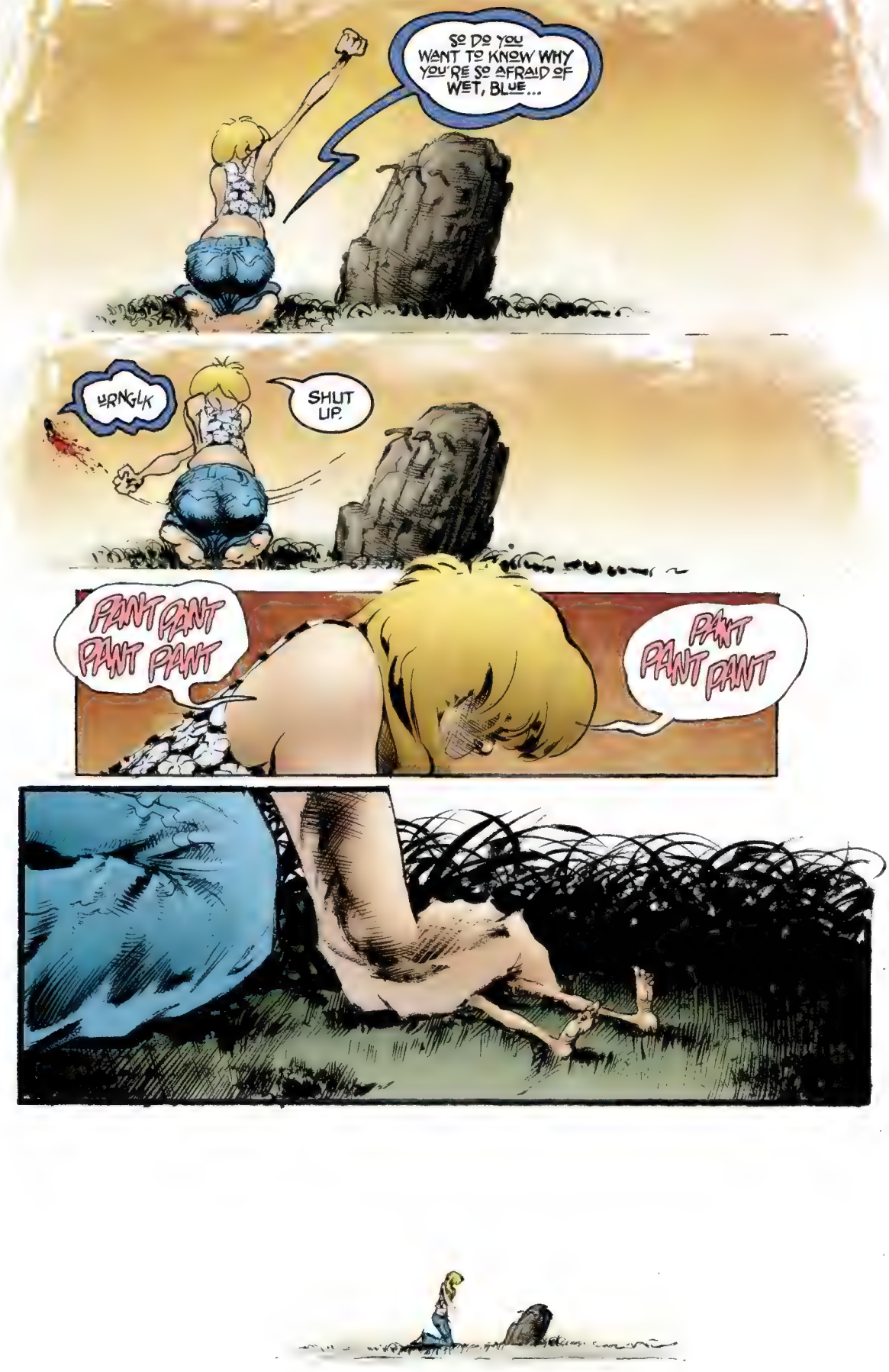
NOTHING'S HAPPENING.
NO *INSIGHTS*, NO *FLASHBACKS*, NO NEAT EXPLANATIONS OF WHY MY LIFE IS SO MISERABLE. NO *NOTHING*.

WHAT KIND OF LAME SPIRIT ANIMAL ARE YOU ANYWAY?
I MEAN, I'M HERE, I'M LISTENING. SAY SOMETHING!
OR ARE YOU JUST PART OF THE USUAL CON, WHERE A HORSE TELLS YOU, "LIFE IS IMPORTANT," "GET HIGH ON LIFE," "HORSES TALK," AND IT'S ALL JUST CRAP?
'COURSE THE ONLY THING STUPIDER THAN A TALKING GRANITE HORSE IS A GIRL WHO LOOKS TO ONE FOR ANSWERS.

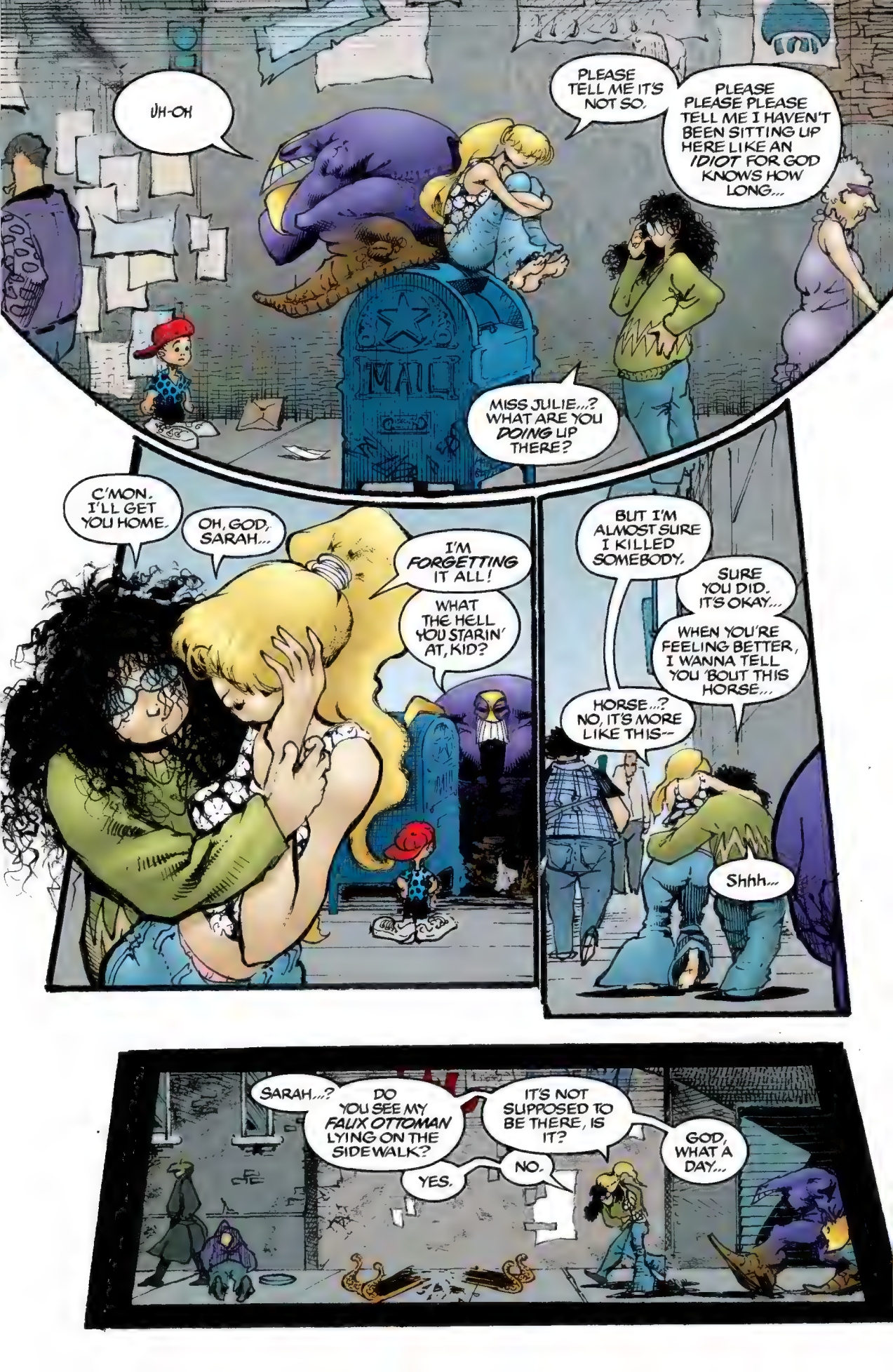

MAXX...?
MAXX... DID YOU ALWAYS...
UNDER THE MASK, I MEAN?
IS THIS THE SECRET... WHY YOU WERE SENT HERE?
OR IS THIS SOME KIND OF AWFUL JOKE?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAXX, ANSWER ME!

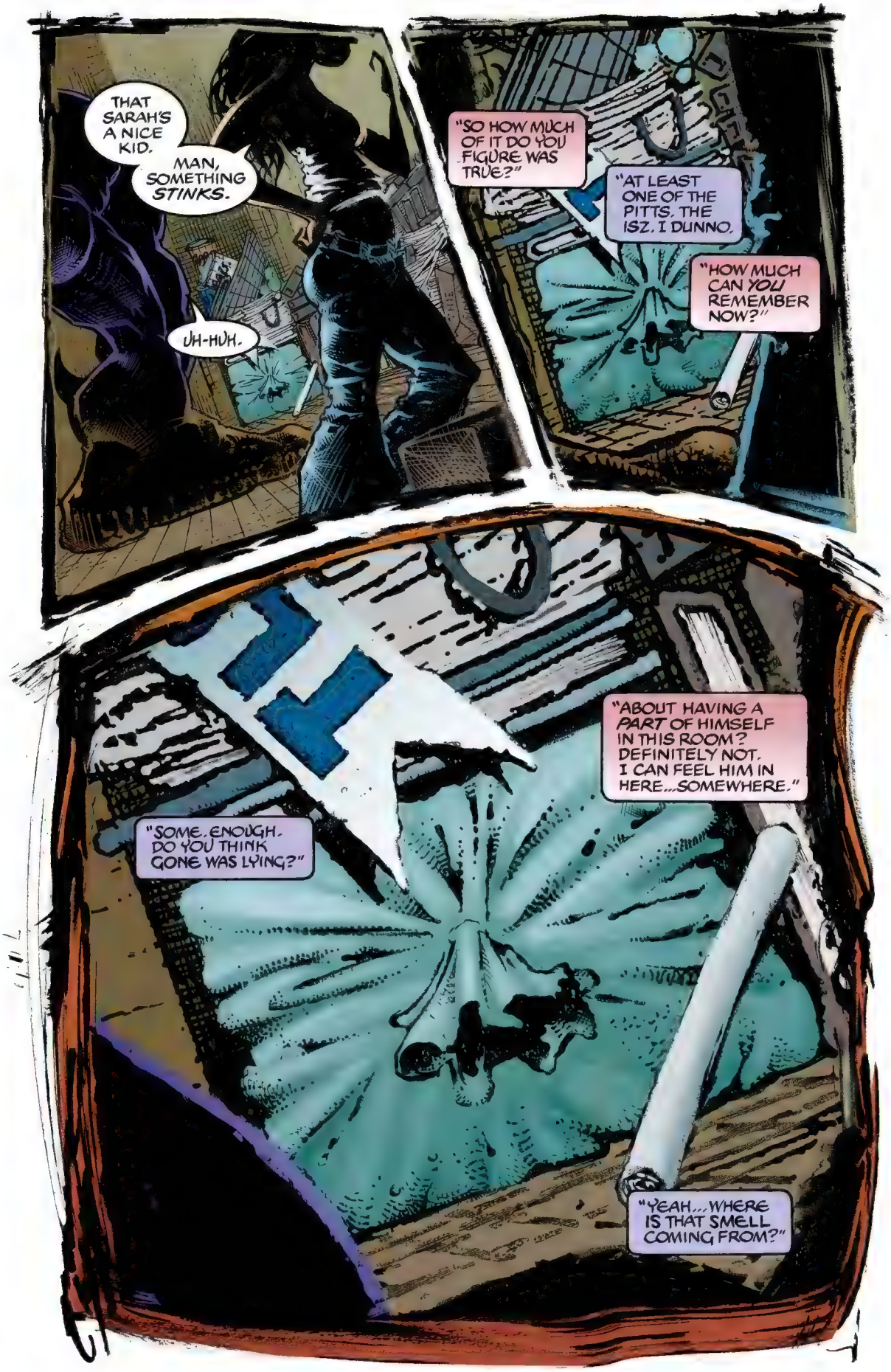

SUDDENLY, HER BRAIN, SENSITIVE AS A SPLAYED WOUND, IS POUNDED BY IMAGES.
WHAT...
...ARE YOU...
...DOING...
...TO ME...?
SHE IS STILL IN THE BATHROOM, WITH THAT TWISTED, LEERING... LONG-EARED...
AND HERE, SEEING THE...
...THE...
...THE LAMP?
THE SPRAY OF WATER DROPS OVER THE SLICK, BLUE SURFACE, THE PAIN, THE BLOOD...
SHOWING YOU THE TRUTH.

HOW... DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT? HOW DO... YOU KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING?
VERY SIMPLE.
A PART OF ME IS PROJECTED INTO THE OTHER WORLD... INTO YOUR HOME. I'M THERE RIGHT NOW... LISTENING.
THAT'S HOW I KNOW THAT THE OUTBACK IS GETTING SMALLER AND SMALLER...
STOP THIS! IT HURTS!
AH. AND I THOUGHT THIS WAS WHAT YOU WANTED. DID YOU SEE IT? BEHIND THE MASK?
"WHILE THE WORLD OF THE CITY IS GROWING! IT'S ALL UNBALANCED!
"WHEN YOU SPOKE TO YOUR OTHER SELVES YESTERDAY, YOU DAMAGED THE BARRIERS!
"I'D EXPLAIN MORE, BUT YOU HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF CUTTING OFF MY HEAD WHEN I TELL YOU THE TRUTH!"


SO DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO AFRAID OF WET, BLUE...
URNGLK
SHUT UP.
PANT PANT PANT PANT
PANT PANT PANT

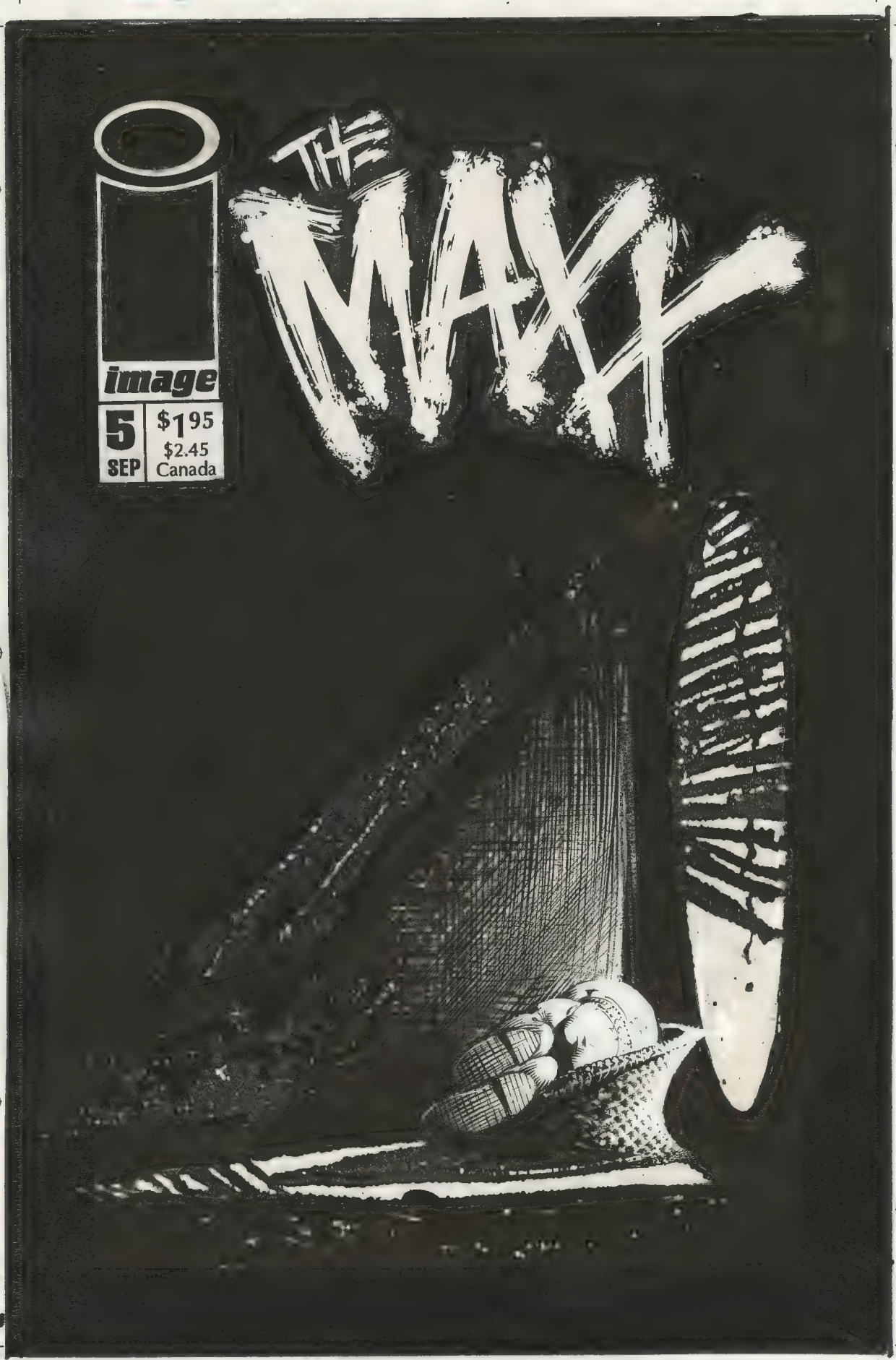
I WONDER IF THIS MEANS I'VE REALLY BEEN HANGING OFF THE STRUT OF A GOODYEAR BLIMP FOR THE LAST 15 MILES?
DO YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO CATCH AN AIRWHALE GOING IN THIS DIRECTION?
KHUMP!
GREAT. NOW WE'RE STUCK IN A MILLION MILES OF PRIMORDIAL WILDERNESS.
BITCH, BITCH, BITCH.


UH-OH
PLEASE TELL ME IT'S NOT SO.
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE TELL ME I HAVEN'T BEEN SITTING UP HERE LIKE AN *IDIOT* FOR GOD KNOWS HOW LONG...
MAIL
MISS JULIE...? WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* UP THERE?
C'MON. I'LL GET YOU HOME.
OH, GOD, SARAH...
I'M *FORGETTING* IT ALL!
WHAT THE HELL YOU STARIN' AT, KID?
BUT I'M ALMOST SURE I KILLED SOMEBODY.
SURE YOU DID. IT'S OKAY...
WHEN YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, I WANNA TELL YOU 'BOUT THIS HORSE...
HORSE...? NO, IT'S MORE LIKE THIS--
Shhh...
SARAH...?
DO YOU SEE MY *FAUX OTTOMAN* LYING ON THE SIDEWALK?
YES.
IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE, IS IT?
NO.
GOD, WHAT A DAY...


THAT SARAH'S A NICE KID.
MAN, SOMETHING STINKS.
UH-HUH.
"SO HOW MUCH OF IT DO YOU FIGURE WAS TRUE?"
"AT LEAST ONE OF THE PITTS, THE ISZ. I DUNNO.
"HOW MUCH CAN YOU REMEMBER NOW?"
"ABOUT HAVING A PART OF HIMSELF IN THIS ROOM? DEFINITELY NOT. I CAN FEEL HIM IN HERE... SOMEWHERE."
"SOME. ENOUGH. DO YOU THINK GONE WAS LYING?"
"YEAH... WHERE IS THAT SMELL COMING FROM?"

So, here I am again, Mr. Ed. This is the THIRD week. I dunno...
Suddenly it happens.
In a single word the horse's voice reveals EVERYTHING.
It's not about the CLAY or a HORSE... it's not about anyone in school, Mom, Dad, Julie or even Maxx.
Oh God... I feel like my insides are turning to jelly...
I'm starting to shake...
...letting my guard down too fast... I need time...
...it's too much... ripping right through me...
Maybe that's why I'm crying. It's all so real now. It's all REAL!
NEXT ISSUE: HEAD TRIPPING AND JUNGLE ROT

Art Gallery featuring Sam Kieth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SEP
$1.95
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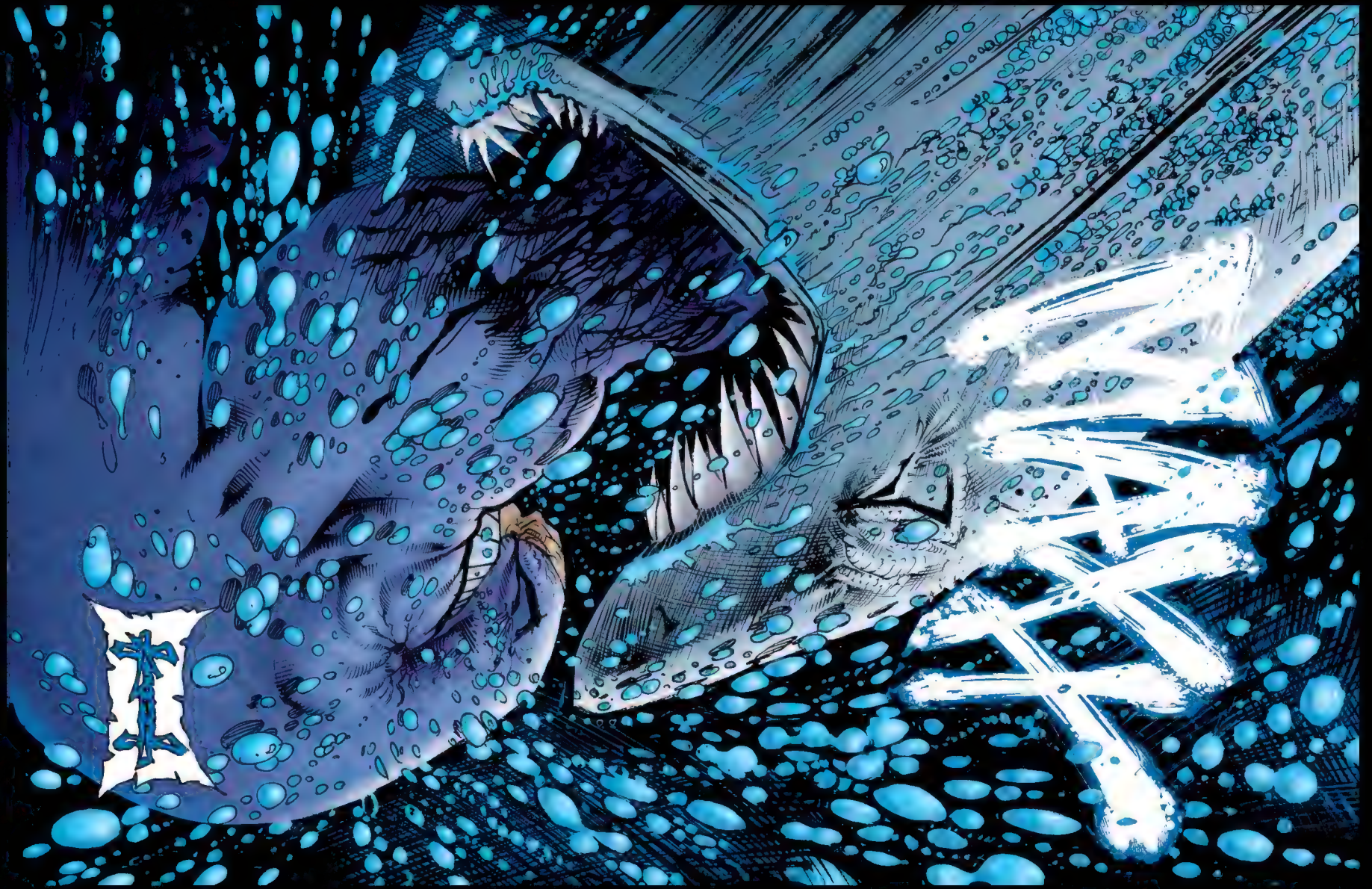
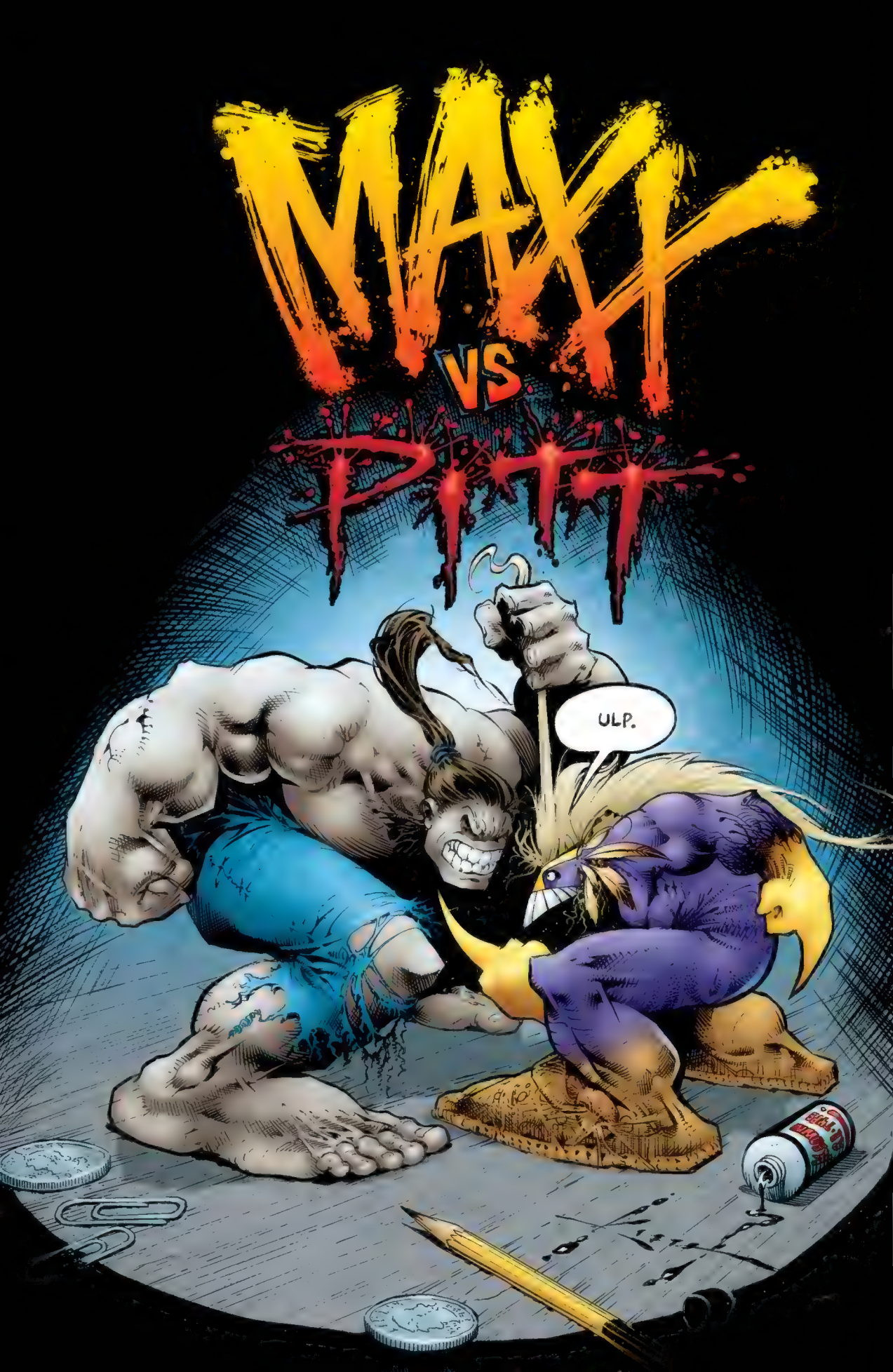
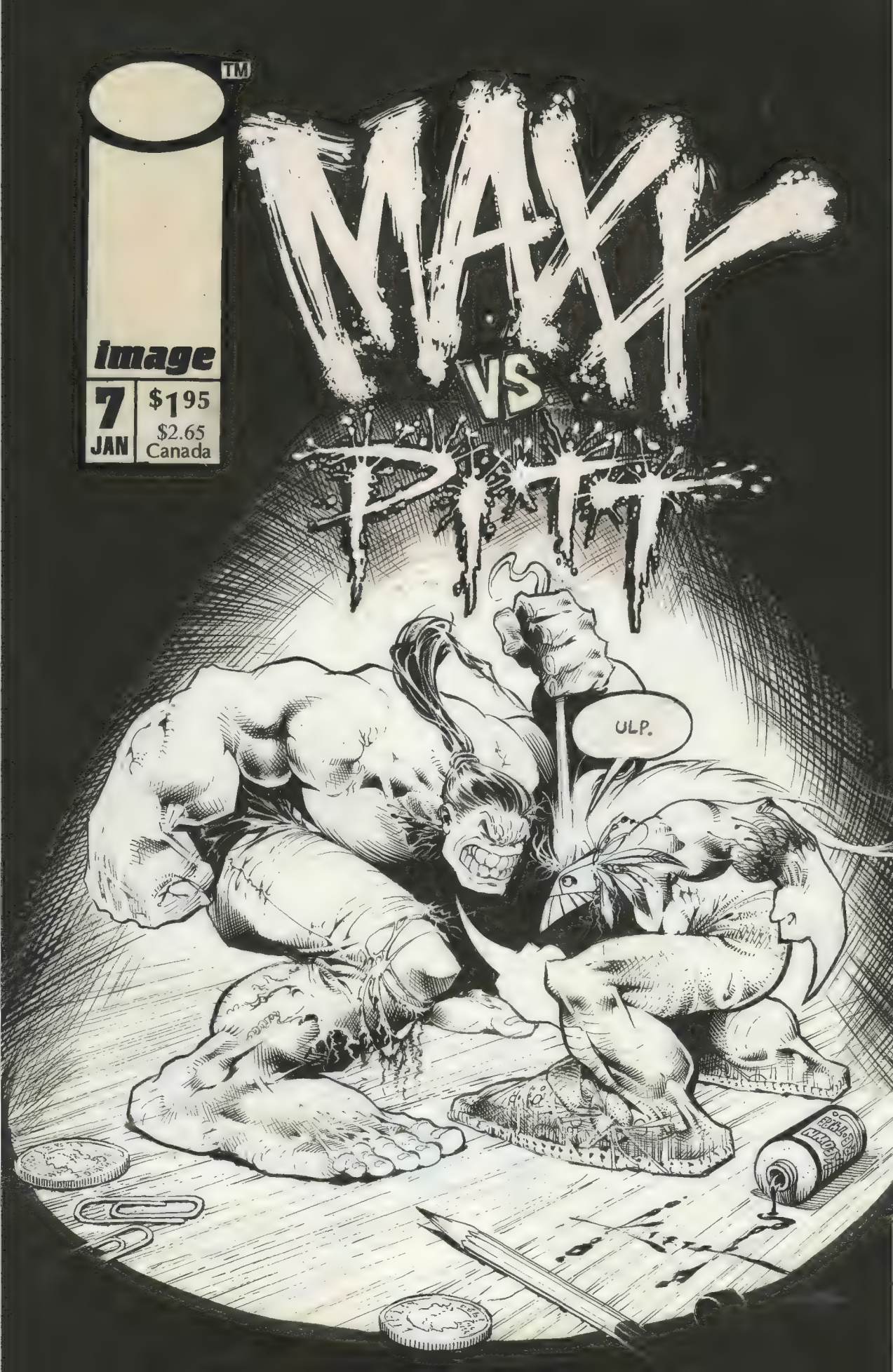
THE MAXX



MAFT


MAX
VS.
PITT
ULP.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THE
WAY

BLOOD LOVE BLOOD LOVE BLOOD LOVE
GEEKIE, YOU GOT NO IDEA HOW TIRED I AM OF HEARING YOU SAY THAT!
IF ONLY MY CLAWS WERE FREE...
HEY, WAIT A SEC... THE SOLVENT MUST'VE DISSOLVED THE GLUE!
MY CLAWS ARE FREE!
LOOK!T THAT! YOU C'N SEE H!S VEINS AND R!DGED MUSCLE AND GR!STLE! BOY 'S HE MAD! I BET WE'RE GONNA SEE SOMETH!NG NOW! SOMETH!NG...

GUESS AGAIN.

TITLE
MONTH ARTIST PAGE

GRAB MY HAND! PULL ME UP! DON'T JUST STAND THERE SAYING "TIMMY"!
KILL!
TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE!
THE BURNING, BARBED RING OF MEMORY!

The classic comic by Sam Kieth and William Messner-Loebs is back in this remastered edition that collects issues #5–8 of *The Maxx* with all-new colors by Ronda Pattison.

IDW

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS